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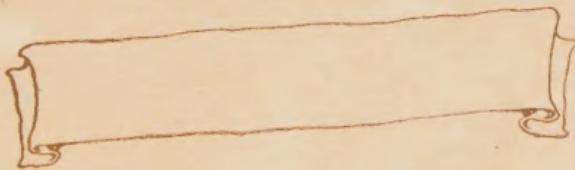
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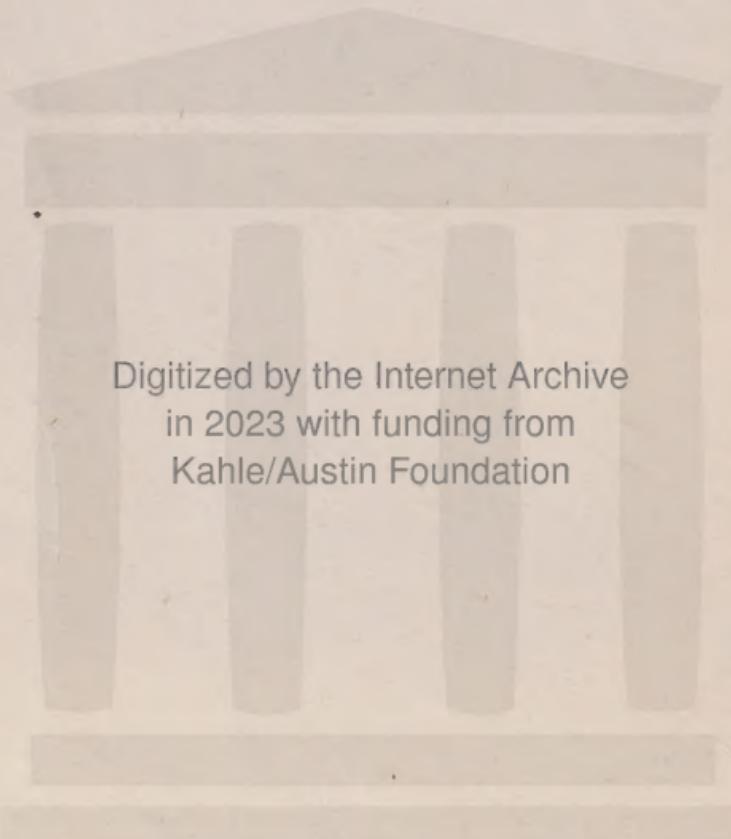
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POETRY AND
THE DRAMA

TENNYSON'S POEMS
1857-1869
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
ERNEST RHYS · VOL. TWO

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THE POEMS OF
ALFRED, LORD
TENNYSON
VOLUME: 2
1857 - 1869



LONDON: PUBLISHED
by J·M·DENT· & SONS· LTD
AND IN NEW YORK
BY E·P· DUTTON&CO

FIRST ISSUE OF THIS EDITION . . . 1912
REPRINTED 1914

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IDYLLS OF THE KING

IDYLLS OF THE KING

“ Flos Regum Arthurus.”

JOSEPH OF EXETER.

DEDICATION

THESE to His Memory—since he held them dear,
Perchance as finding there unconsciously
Some image of himself—I dedicate,
I dedicate, I consecrate with tears—
These Idylls.

And indeed He seems to me
Scarce other than my own ideal knight,
“ Who reverenced his conscience as his king;
Whose glory was, redressing human wrong;
Who spake no slander, no, nor listen'd to it;
Who loved one only and who clave to her—”
Her—over all whose realms to their last isle,
Commingled with the gloom of imminent war,
The shadow of His loss drew like eclipse,
Darkening the world. We have lost him: he is gone:
We know him now: all narrow jealousies
Are silent; and we see him as he moved,
How modest, kindly, all-accomplish'd, wise,
With what sublime repression of himself,
And in what limits, and how tenderly;
Not swaying to this faction or to that;
Not making his high place the lawless perch
Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage-ground
For pleasure; but thro' all this tract of years
Wearing the white flower of a blameless life,
Before a thousand peering littlenesses,
In that fierce light which beats upon a throne,
And blackens every blot: for where is he,

Idylls of the King

Who dares foreshadow for an only son
A lovelier life, a more unstain'd, than his?
Or how should England dreaming of *his* sons
Hope more for these than some inheritance
Of such a life, a heart, a mind as thine,
Thou noble Father of her Kings to be,
Laborious for her people and her poor—
Voice in the rich dawn of an ampler day—
Far-sighted summoner of War and Waste
To fruitful strifes and rivalries of peace—
Sweet nature gilded by the gracious gleam
Of letters, dear to Science, dear to Art,
Dear to thy land and ours, a Prince indeed,
Beyond all titles, and a household name,
Hereafter, thro' all times, Albert the Good.

Break not, O woman's-heart, but still endure;
Break not, for thou art Royal, but endure,
Remembering all the beauty of that star
Which shone so close beside Thee, that ye made
One light together, but has past and leaves
The Crown a lonely splendour.

May all love,

His love, unseen but felt, o'ershadow Thee,
The love of all Thy sons encompass Thee,
The love of all Thy daughters cherish Thee,
The love of all Thy people comfort Thee,
Till God's love set Thee at his side again!

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

LEODOGRAN, the King of Cameliard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land;
And still from time to time the heathen host
Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was left.
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
For first Aurelius lived and fought and died,
And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either fail'd to make the kingdom one.
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thro' the puissance of his Table Round,
Drew all their petty princedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm, and reign'd.

And thus the land of Cameliard was waste,
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast therein,
And none or few to scare or chase the beast;
So that wild dog, and wolf and boar and bear
Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,
And wallow'd in the gardens of the king.
And ever and anon the wolf would steal
The children and devour, but now and then,
Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat
To human sucklings; and the children, housed
In her foul den, there at their meat would growl,
And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolf-like men,

Idylls of the King

Worse than the wolves. And King Leodogran
 Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,
 And Cæsar's eagle: then his brother king,
 Rience, assail'd him: last a heathen horde,
 Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with blood,
 And on the spike that split the mother's heart
 Spitting the child, brake on him, till, amazed,
 He knew not whither he should turn for aid.

But—for he heard of Arthur newly crown'd,
 Tho' not without an uproar made by those
 Who cried, “He is not Uther's son”—the king
 Sent to him, saying, “Arise, and help us thou!
 For here between the man and beast we die.”

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,
 But heard the call, and came: and Guinevere
 Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass;
 But since he neither wore on helm or shield
 The golden symbol of his kinglihood,
 But rode a simple knight among his knights,
 And many of these in richer arms than he,
 She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she saw,
 One among many, tho' his face was bare.
 But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
 Felt the light of her eyes into his life
 Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitch'd
 His tents beside the forest. And he drove
 The heathen, and he slew the beast, and fell'd
 The forest, and let in the sun, and made
 Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight;
 And so return'd.

For while he linger'd there,
 A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts
 Of those great Lords and Barons of his realm
 Flash'd forth and into war: for most of these
 Made head against him, crying, “Who is he
 That he should rule us? who hath proven him
 King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,
 And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,

The Coming of Arthur

7

Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorloïs, not the king;
This is the son of Anton, not the king.”

And Arthur, passing thence to battle, felt
Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,
Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere;
And thinking as he rode, “ Her father said
That there between the man and beast they die.
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
Up to my throne, and side by side with me?
What happiness to reign a lonely king,
Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,
O earth that soundest hollow under me,
Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be join'd
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will, nor work my work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm
Victor and lord. But were I join'd with her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live.”

And Arthur from the field of battle sent
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,
Saying, “ If I in ought have served thee well,
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife.”

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart
Debating—“ How should I that am a king,
However much he holp me at my need,
Give my one daughter saving to a king,
And a king's son”—lifted his voice, and call'd
A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel: “ Knowest thou aught of Arthur's birth? ”

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said,

Idylls of the King

“Sir king, there be but two old men that know:
 And each is twice as old as I; and one
 Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
 King Uther thro’ his magic art; and one
 Is Merlin’s master (so they call him) Bleys,
 Who taught him magic; but the scholar ran
 Before the master, and so far, that Bleys
 Laid magic by, and sat him down, and wrote
 All things and whatsoever Merlin did
 In one great annal-book, where after-years
 Will learn the secret of our Arthur’s birth.”

To whom the King Leodogran replied,
 “O friend, had I been holpen half as well
 By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,
 Then beast and man had had their share of me:
 But summon here before us yet once more
 Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere.”

Then, when they came before him, the king said,
 “I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser fowl,
 And reason in the chase: but wherefore now
 Do these your lords stir up the heat of war,
 Some calling Arthur born of Gorloïs,
 Others of Anton? Tell me, ye yourselves,
 Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther’s son?”

And Ulfius and Brastias answer’d, “Ay.”
 Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
 Knighted by Arthur at his crowning, spake—
 For bold in heart and act and word was he,
 Whenever slander breathed against the king—

“Sir, there be many rumours on this head:
 For there be those who hate him in their hearts,
 Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet,
 And theirs are bestial, hold him less than man:
 And there be those who deem him more than man,
 And dream he dropt from heaven: but my belief
 In all this matter—so ye care to learn—
 Sir, for ye know that in King Uther’s time

The prince and warrior Gorloïs, he that held
Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne:
And daughters had she borne him,—one whereof
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,
Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved
To Arthur,—but a son she had not borne.
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love:
But she, a stainless wife to Gorloïs,
So loathed the bright dishonour of his love,
That Gorloïs and King Uther went to war:
And overthrown was Gorloïs and slain.
Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged
Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,
Left her and fled, and Uther enter'd in,
And there was none to call to but himself.
So, compass'd by the power of the king,
Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,
And with a shameful swiftness: afterward,
Not many moons, King Uther died himself,
Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule
After him, lest the realm should go to wrack.
And that same night, the night of the new year,
By reason of the bitterness and grief
That vext his mother, all before his time
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
Deliver'd at a secret postern-gate
To Merlin, to be holden far apart
Until his hour should come; because the lords
Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
Wild beasts, and surely would have torn the child
Piecemeal among them, had they known; for each
But sought to rule for his own self and hand,
And many hated Uther for the sake
Of Gorloïs. Wherefore Merlin took the child,
And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
And ancient friend of Uther; and his wife
Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him with her own;
And no man knew. And ever since the lords
Have foughten like wild beasts among themselves,

So that the realm has gone to wrack: but now,
 This year, when Merlin (for his hour had come)
 Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the hall,
 Proclaiming, ‘Here is Uther’s heir, your king,’
 A hundred voices cried, ‘Away with him!
 No king of ours! a son of Gorloïs he,
 Or else the child of Anton, and no king,
 Or else baseborn.’ Yet Merlin thro’ his craft,
 And while the people clamour’d for a king,
 Had Arthur crown’d; but after, the great lords
 Banded, and so brake out in open war.”

Then while the king debated with himself
 If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,
 Or born the son of Gorloïs, after death,
 Or Uther’s son, and born before his time,
 Or whether there were truth in anything
 Said by these three, there came to Cameliard,
 With Gawain and young Modred, her two sons,
 Lot’s wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent;
 Whom as he could, not as he would, the king
 Made feast for, saying, as they sat at meat,

“A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas—
 Ye come from Arthur’s court: think ye this king—
 So few his knights, however brave they be—
 Hath body enow to beat his foemen down?”

“O king,” she cried, “and I will tell thee: few,
 Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him;
 For I was near him when the savage yells
 Of Uther’s peerage died, and Arthur sat
 Crown’d on the daïs, and his warriors cried,
 ‘Be thou the king, and we will work thy will
 Who love thee.’ Then the king in low deep tones,
 And simple words of great authority,
 Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,
 That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
 Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
 Some flush’d, and others dazed, as one who wakes
 Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

“ But when he spake and cheer’d his Table Round
With large divine and comfortable words
Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld
From eye to eye thro’ all their Order flash
A momentary likeness of the king:
And ere it left their faces, thro’ the cross
And those around it and the Crucified,
Down from the casement over Arthur, smote
Flame-colour, vert and azure, in three rays,
One falling upon each of three fair queens,
Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends
Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

“ And there I saw mage Merlin, whose vast wit
And hundred winters are but as the hands
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

“ And near him stood the Lady of the Lake,
Who knows a subtler magic than his own—
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
She gave the king his huge cross-hilted sword,
Whereby to drive the heathen out: a mist
Of incense curl’d about her, and her face
Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;
But there was heard among the holy hymns
A voice as of the waters, for she dwells
Down in a deep, calm, whatsoever storms
May shake the world, and when the surface rolls,
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

“ There likewise I beheld Excalibur
Before him at his crowning borne, the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur row’d across and took it—rich
With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright
That men are blinded by it—on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
‘ Take me,’ but turn the blade and you shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,

'Cast me away!' And sad was Arthur's face
 Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him,
 'Take thou and strike! the time to cast away
 Is yet far off.' So this great brand the king
 Took, and by this will beat his foemen down."

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought
 To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask'd,
 Fixing full eyes of question on her face,
 "The swallow and the swift are near akin,
 But thou art closer to this noble prince,
 Being his own dear sister;" and she said,
 "Daughter of Gorloïs and Ygerne am I;"
 "And therefore Arthur's sister," ask'd the King.
 She answer'd, "These be secret things," and sign'd
 To those two sons to pass and let them be.
 And Gawain went, and breaking into song
 Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair
 Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw:
 But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
 And there half heard; the same that afterward
 Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom.

And then the Queen made answer, "What know I?
 For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,
 And dark in hair and eyes am I; and dark
 Was Gorloïs, yea and dark was Uther too,
 Wellnigh to blackness; but this king is fair
 Beyond the race of Britons and of men.
 Moreover always in my mind I hear
 A cry from out the dawning of my life,
 A mother weeping, and I hear her say,
 'O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
 To guard thee on the rough ways of the world.'"

"Ay," said the King, "and hear ye such a cry?
 But when did Arthur chance upon thee first?"

"O king!" she cried, "and I will tell thee true:
 He found me first when yet a little maid:
 Beaten I had been for a little fault

Whereof I was not guilty; and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of heath,
And hated this fair world and all therein,
And wept, and wish'd that I were dead; and he—
I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can walk
Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side,
And spake sweet words, and comforted my heart,
And dried my tears, being a child with me.
And many a time he came, and evermore
As I grew greater grew with me; and sad
At times he seem'd, and sad with him was I
Stern too at times, and then I loved him not,
But sweet again, and then I loved him well.
And now of late I see him less and less,
But those first days had golden hours for me,
For then I surely thought he would be king.

“ But let me tell thee now another tale:
For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they say,
Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To hear him speak before he left his life.
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the mage,
And when I enter'd told me that himself
And Merlin ever served about the king,
Uther, before he died, and on the night
When Uther in Tintagil past away
Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two
Left the still king, and passing forth to breathe,
Then from the castle gateway by the chasm
Descending thro' the dismal night—a night
In which the bounds of heaven and earth were lost—
Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape thereof
A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern
Bright with a shining people on the decks,
And gone as soon as seen. And the then two
Dropt to the cove, and watch'd the great sea fall,
Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,
Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep
And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged

Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:
 And down the wave and in the flame was borne
 A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
 Who stoopt and caught the babe, and cried 'The King!
 Here is an heir for Uther!' And the fringe
 Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,
 Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,
 And all at once all round him rose in fire,
 So that the child and he were clothed in fire.
 And presently thereafter follow'd calm,
 Free sky and stars: 'And this same child,' he said,
 'Is he who reigns; nor could I part in peace
 Till this were told.' And saying this the seer
 Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of death,
 Not ever to be question'd any more
 Save on the further side; but when I met
 Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were truth—
 The shining dragon and the naked child
 Descending in the glory of the seas—
 He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me
 In riddling triplets of old time, and said:

" ' Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky!
 A young man will be wiser by and by;
 An old man's wit may wander ere he die.

Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!
 And truth is this to me, and that to thee;
 And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

Rain, sun, and rain! and the free blossom blows:
 Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who knows?
 From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'

" So Merlin riddling anger'd me; but thou
 Fear not to give this king thine only child,
 Guinevere: so great bards of him will sing
 Hereafter; and dark sayings from of old
 Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of men,
 And echo'd by old folk beside their fires
 For comfort after their wage-work is done,
 Speak of the king; and Merlin in our time
 Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn

Tho' men may wound him that he will not die,
But pass, again to come; and then or now
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
Till these and all men hail him for their king."

She spake and King Leodogran rejoiced,
But musing " Shall I answer yea or nay? "
Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept, and saw,
Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,
Field after field, up to a height, the peak
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king,
Now looming, and now lost; and on the slope
The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was driven,
Fire glimpsed; and all the land from roof to rick,
In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,
Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with the haze
And made it thicker; while the phantom king
Sent out at times a voice; and here or there
Stood one who pointed toward the voice, the rest
Slew on and burnt, crying, " No king of ours,
No son of Uther, and no king of ours ";
Till with a wink his dream was changed, the haze
Descended, and the solid earth became
As nothing, and the king stood out in heaven,
Crown'd. And Leodogran awoke, and sent
Ulfius, and Brastias and Bedivere,
Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom he loved
And honour'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride forth
And bring the Queen;—and watch'd him from the gates:
And Lancelot past away among the flowers,
(For then was latter April) and return'd
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.
To whom arrived, by Dubric the high saint,
Chief of the church in Britain, and before
The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the king
That morn was married, while in stainless white,
The fair beginners of a nobler time,
And glorying in their vows and him, his knights
Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.

And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake,
“ Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world
Other, and may thy Queen be one with thee,
And all this Order of thy Table Round
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their king.”

Then at the marriage feast came in from Rome,
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
Great lords, who claim'd the tribute as of yore.
But Arthur spake, “ Behold, for these have sworn
To fight my wars, and worship me their king;
The old order changeth, yielding place to new;
And we that fight for our fair father Christ,
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old
To drive the heathen from your Roman wall,
No tribute will we pay: ” so those great lords
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and thro' that strength the king
Drew in the petty princedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign'd.

GERAINT AND ENID

THE brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's court,
A tributary prince of Devon, one
Of that great order of the Table Round,
Had married Enid, Yniol's only child,
And loved her, as he loved the light of Heaven.
And as the light of Heaven varies, now
At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night
With moon and trembling stars, so loved Geraint
To make her beauty vary day by day,
In crimsones and in purples and in gems.
And Enid, but to please her husband's eye,
Who first had found and loved her in a state
Of broken fortunes, daily fronted him
In some fresh splendour; and the Queen herself,
Grateful to Prince Geraint for service done,
Loved her, and often with her own white hands
Array'd and deck'd her, as the loveliest,
Next after her own self, in all the court.
And Enid loved the Queen, and with true heart
Adored her, as the stateliest and the best
And loveliest of all women upon earth.
And seeing them so tender and so close,
Long in their common love rejoiced Geraint.
But when a rumour rose about the Queen,
Touching her guilty love for Lancelot,
Tho' yet there lived no proof, nor yet was heard
The world's loud whisper breaking into storm,
Not less Geraint believed it; and there fell
A horror on him, lest his gentle wife,
Thro' that great tenderness for Guinevere,
Had suffer'd, or should suffer any taint
In nature: wherefore going to the king,
He made this pretext, that his princedom lay
Close on the borders of a territory,
Wherein were bandit earls, and caitiff knights,

Assassins, and all flyers from the hand
Of Justice, and whatever loathes a law:
And therefore, till the king himself should please
To cleanse this common sewer of all his realm,
He craved a fair permission to depart,
And there defend his marches; and the king
Mused for a little on his plea, but, last,
Allowing it, the Prince and Enid rode,
And fifty knights rode with them, to the shores
Of Severn, and they past to their own land;
Where, thinking, that if ever yet was wife
True to her lord, mine shall be so to me,
He compass'd her with sweet observances
And worship, never leaving her, and grew
Forgetful of his promise to the king,
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
Forgetful of his glory and his name,
Forgetful of his princedom and its cares.
And this forgetfulness was hateful to her.
And by and by the people, when they met
In twos and threes, or fuller companies,
Began to scoff and jeer and babble of him
As of a prince whose manhood was all gone,
And molten down in mere uxoriousness.
And this she gather'd from the people's eyes:
This too the women who attired her head,
To please her, dwelling on his boundless love,
Told Enid, and they sadden'd her the more:
And day by day she thought to tell Geraint,
But could not out of bashful delicacy;
While he that watch'd her sadden, was the more
Suspicious that her nature had a taint.

At last, it chanced that on a summer morn
(They sleeping each by other) the new sun
Beat thro' the blindless casement of the room,
And heated the strong warrior in his dreams;
Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,
And bared the knotted column of his throat,
The massive square of his heroic breast,

And arms on which the standing muscle sloped,
As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it.
And Enid woke and sat beside the couch,
Admiring him, and thought within herself,
Was ever man so grandly made as he?
Then, like a shadow, past the people's talk
And accusation of uxoriousness
Across her mind, and bowing over him,
Low to her own heart piteously she said:

“ O noble breast and all-puissant arms,
Am I the cause, I the poor cause that men
Reproach you, saying all your force is gone?
I *am* the cause because I dare not speak
And tell him what I think and what they say.
And yet I hate that he should linger here;
I cannot love my lord and not his name.
Far liever had I gird his harness on him,
And ride with him to battle and stand by,
And watch his mighty hand striking great blows
At caitiffs and at wrongers of the world.
Far better were I laid in the dark earth,
Not hearing any more his noble voice,
Not to be folded more in these dear arms,
And darken'd from the high light in his eyes,
Than that my lord thro' me should suffer shame.
Am I so bold, and could I so stand by,
And see my dear lord wounded in the strife,
Or may be pierced to death before mine eyes,
And yet not dare to tell him what I think,
And how men slur him, saying all his force
Is melted into mere effeminacy?
O me, I fear that I am no true wife.”

Half inwardly, half audibly she spoke,
And the strong passion in her made her weep
True tears upon his broad and naked breast,
And these awoke him, and by great mischance
He heard but fragments of her later words,
And that she fear'd she was not a true wife.

And then he thought, " In spite of all my care,
For all my pains, poor man, for all my pains,
She is not faithful to me, and I see her
Weeping for some gay knight in Arthur's hall." "
Then tho' he loved and reverenced her too much
To dream she could be guilty of foul act,
Right thro' his manful breast darted the pang
That makes a man, in the sweet face of her
Whom he loves most, lonely and miserable.
At this he hurl'd his huge limbs out of bed,
And shook his drowsy squire awake and cried,
" My charger and her palfrey," then to her,
" I will ride forth into the wilderness;
For tho' it seems my spurs are yet to win,
I have not fall'n so low as some would wish.
And you, put on your worst and meanest dress
And ride with me." And Enid ask'd, amazed,
" If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault."
But he, " I charge you, ask not but obey."
Then she bethought her of a faded silk,
A faded mantle and a faded veil,
And moving toward a cedarn cabinet,
Wherein she kept them folded reverently
With sprigs of summer laid between the folds,
She took them, and array'd herself therein,
Remembering when first he came on her
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,
And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey to her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the court.

For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before
Held court at old Caerleon upon Usk.
There on a day, he sitting high in hall,
Before him came a forester of Dean,
Wet from the woods, with notice of a hart
Taller than all his fellows, milky-white,
First seen that day: these things he told the king.
Then the good king gave order to let blow
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn.
And when the Queen petition'd for his leave

To see the hunt, allow'd it easily.
So with the morning all the court were gone.
But Guinevere lay late into the morn,
Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming of her love
For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt;
But rose at last, a single maiden with her,
Took horse, and forded Usk, and gain'd the wood;
There, on a little knoll beside it, stay'd
Waiting to hear the hounds; but heard instead
A sudden sound of hoofs, for Prince Geraint,
Late also, wearing neither hunting-dress
Nor weapon, save a golden-hilted brand,
Came quickly flashing thro' the shallow ford
Behind them, and so gallop'd up the knoll.
A purple scarf, at either end whereof
There swung an apple of the purest gold,
Sway'd round about him, as he gallop'd up
To join them, glancing like a dragon-fly
In summer suit and silks of holiday.
Low bow'd the tributary Prince, and she,
Sweetly and statelily, and with all grace
Of womanhood and queenhood, answer'd him:
“ Late, late, Sir Prince,” she said, “ later than we!”
“ Yea, noble Queen,” he answer'd, “ and so late
That I but come like you to see the hunt,
Not join it.” “ Therefore wait with me,” she said;
“ For on this little knoll, if anywhere,
There is good chance that we shall hear the hounds:
Here often they break covert at our feet.”

And while they listen'd for the distant hunt,
And chiefly for the baying of Cavall,
King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth, there rode
Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf;
Whereof the dwarf lagg'd latest, and the knight
Had visor up, and show'd a youthful face,
Imperious, and of haughtiest lineaments.
And Guinevere, not mindful of his face
In the king's hall, desired his name, and sent
Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf;
Who being vicious, old and irritable,

And doubling all his master's vice of pride,
 Made answer sharply that she should not know.
 "Then will I ask it of himself," she said.
 "Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not," cried the dwarf;
 "Thou art not worthy ev'n to speak of him;"
 And when she put her horse toward the knight,
 Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd
 Indignant to the Queen; at which Geraint
 Exclaiming, "Surely I will learn the name,"
 Made sharply to the dwarf, and ask'd it of him,
 Who answer'd as before; and when the Prince
 Had put his horse in motion toward the knight,
 Struck at him with his whip, and cut his cheek.
 The Prince's blood spirted upon the scarf,
 Dyeing it; and his quick, instinctive hand
 Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him:
 But he, from his exceeding manfulness
 And pure nobility of temperament,
 Wroth to be wroth at such a worm, refrain'd
 From ev'n a word, and so returning said:

"I will avenge this insult, noble Queen,
 Done in your maiden's person to yourself:
 And I will track this vermin to their earths:
 For tho' I ride unarm'd, I do not doubt
 To find, at some place I shall come at, arms
 On loan, or else for pledge; and, being found,
 Then will I fight him, and will break his pride,
 And on the third day, will again be here,
 So that I be not fall'n in fight. Farewell."

"Farewell, fair Prince," answer'd the stately Queen.
 "Be prosperous in this journey, as in all;
 And may you light on all things that you love,
 And live to wed with her whom first you love:
 But ere you wed with any, bring your bride,
 And I, were she the daughter of a king,
 Yea, tho' she were a beggar from the hedge,
 Will clothe her for her bridals like the sun."

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that he heard

The noble hart at bay, now the far horn,
A little vext at losing of the hunt,
A little at the vile occasion, rode,
By ups and downs, thro' many a grassy glade
And valley, with fixt eye following the thre.
At last they issued from the world of wood,
And climb'd upon a fair and even ridge,
And show'd themselves against the sky, and sank.
And thither came Geraint, and underneath
Beheld the long street of a little town
In a long valley, on one side of which,
White from the mason's hand, a fortress rose;
And on one side a castle in decay,
Beyond a bridge that spann'd a dry ravine:
And out of town and valley came a noise
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed
Brawling, or like a clamour of the rooks
At distance, ere they settle for the night.

And onward to the fortress rode the three,
And enter'd, and were lost behind the walls.
“ So,” thought Geraint, “ I have track'd him to his earth.”
And down the long street riding wearily,
Found every hostel full, and everywhere
Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot hiss
And bustling whistle of the youth who scour'd
His master's armour; and of such a one
He ask'd, “ What means the tumult in the town? ”
Who told him, scouring still, “ The sparrow-hawk! ”
Then riding close behind an ancient churl,
Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,
Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,
Ask'd yet once more what meant the hubbub here?
Who answer'd gruffly, “ Ugh! the sparrow-hawk.”
Then riding further past an armourer's,
Who, with back turn'd, and bow'd above his work,
Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,
He put the self-same query, but the man
Not turning round, nor looking at him, said:
“ Friend, he that labours for the sparrow-hawk
Has little time for idle questioners.”

Whereat Geraint flash'd into sudden spleen:
 "A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-hawk!
 Tits, wrens, and all wing'd nothings peck him dead!
 Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg
 The murmur of the world! What is it to me?
 O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,
 Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-hawks!
 Speak, if you be not like the rest, hawk-mad,
 Where can I get me harbourage for the night?
 And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy? Speak!"
 At this the armourer turning all amazed
 And seeing one so gay in purple silks,
 Came forward with the helmet yet in hand
 And answer'd, "Pardon me, O stranger knight;
 We hold a tourney here to-morrow morn,
 And there is scanty time for half the work.
 Arms? truth! I know not: all are wanted here,
 Harbourage? truth, good truth, I know not, save,
 It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge
 Yonder." He spoke and fell to work again.

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful yet,
 Across the bridge that spann'd the dry ravine.
 There musing sat the hoary-headed Earl,
 (His dress a suit of fray'd magnificence,
 Once fit for feasts of ceremony) and said:
 "Whither, fair son?" to whom Geraint replied,
 "O friend, I seek a harbourage for the night."
 Then Yniol, "Enter therefore and partake
 The slender entertainment of a house
 Once rich, now poor, but ever open-door'd."
 "Thanks, venerable friend," replied Geraint;
 "So that you do not serve me sparrow-hawks
 For supper, I will enter, I will eat
 With all the passion of a twelve hours' fast."
 Then sigh'd and smiled the hoary-headed Earl,
 And answer'd, "Graver cause than yours is mine
 To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-hawk:
 But in, go in; for save yourself desire it,
 We will not touch upon him ev'n in jest."

Then rode Geraint into the castle court,
 His charger trampling many a prickly star
 Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones.
 He look'd and saw that all was ruinous.
 Here stood a shatter'd archway plumed with fern,
 And here had fall'n a great part of a tower,
 Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the cliff,
 And like a crag was gay with wilding flowers:
 And high above a piece of turret stair,
 Worn by the feet that now were silent, wound
 Bare to the sun, and monstrous ivy-stems
 Claspt the gray walls with hairy-fibred arms,
 And suck'd the joining of the stones, and look'd
 A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove.

And while he waited in the castle court,
 The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang
 Clear thro' the open casement of the Hall,
 Singing; and as the sweet voice of a bird,
 Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,
 Moves him to think what kind of bird it is
 That sings so delicately clear, and make
 Conjecture of the plumage and the form;
 So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint;
 And made him like a man abroad at morn
 When first the liquid note beloved of men
 Comes flying over many a windy wave
 To Britain, and in April suddenly
 Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green and red,
 And he suspends his converse with a friend,
 Or it may be the labour of his hands,
 To think or say, "there is the nightingale;"
 So fared it with Geraint, who thought and said,
 "Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me."

It chanced the song that Enid sang was one
 Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid sang:

"Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud;
 Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine, storm, and cloud;
 Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

" Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;
 With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
 Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great."

" Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;
 Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
 For man is man and master of his fate."

" Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;
 Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;
 Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate."

" Hark, by the bird's song you may learn the nest,"
 Said Yniol; " Enter quickly." Entering then,
 Right o'er a mount of newly-fallen stones,
 The dusky-rafter'd many-cobweb'd Hall,
 He found an ancient dame in dim brocade;
 And near her, like a blossom vermeil-white,
 That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,
 Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,
 Her daughter. In a moment thought Geraint,
 " Here by God's rood is the one maid for me."
 But none spake word except the hoary Earl:
 " Enid, the good knight's horse stands in the court;
 Take him to stall, and give him corn, and then
 Go to the town and buy us flesh and wine;
 And we will make us merry as we may.
 Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great."

He spake: the Prince, as Enid past him, fain
 To follow, strode a stride, but Yniol caught
 His purple scarf, and held, and said " Forbear!
 Rest! the good house, tho' ruin'd, O my Son,
 Endures not that her guest should serve himself."
 And reverencing the custom of the house
 Geraint, from utter courtesy, forbore.

So Enid took his charger to the stall;
 And after went her way across the bridge,
 And reach'd the town, and while the Prince and Earl
 Yet spoke together, came again with one,

A youth, that following with a costrel bore
The means of goodly welcome, flesh and wine.
And Enid brought sweet cakes to make them cheer,
And in her veil enfolded, manchet bread.
And then, because their hall must also serve
For kitchen, boil'd the flesh, and spread the board,
And stood behind, and waited on the three.
And seeing her so sweet and serviceable,
Geraint had longing in him evermore
To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,
That crost the trencher as she laid it down:
But after all had eaten, then Geraint,
For now the wine made summer in his veins,
Let his eye rove in following, or rest
On Enid at her lowly handmaid-work,
Now here, now there, about the dusky hall;
Then suddenly address the hoary Earl:

“ Fair Host and Earl, I pray your courtesy;
This sparrow-hawk, what is he, tell me of him.
His name? but no, good faith, I will not have it:
For if he be the knight whom late I saw
Ride into that new fortress by your town,
White from the mason's hand, then have I sworn
From his own lips to have it—I am Geraint
Of Devon—for this morning when the Queen
Sent her own maiden to demand the name,
His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,
Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd
Indignant to the Queen; and then I swore
That I would track this caitiff to his hold,
And fight and break his pride, and have it of him.
And all unarm'd I rode, and thought to find
Arms in your town, where all the men are mad;
They take the rustic murmur of their bourg
For the great wave that echoes round the world
They would not hear me speak: but if you know
Where I can light on arms, or if yourself
Should have them, tell me, seeing I have sworn
That I will break his pride and learn his name,
Avenging this great insult done the Queen.”

Then cried Earl Yniol. “ Art thou he indeed,
Geraint, a name far-sounded among men
For noble needs? and truly I, when first
I saw you moving by me on the bridge,
Felt you were somewhat, yea and by your state
And presence might have guess’d you one of those
That eat in Arthur’s hall at Camelot.
Nor speak I now from foolish flattery;
For this dear child hath often heard me praise
Your feats of arms, and often when I paused
Hath ask’d again, and ever loved to hear;
So grateful is the noise of noble deeds
To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong:
O never yet had woman such a pair
Of suitors as this maiden; first Limours,
A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,
Drunk even when he woo’d: and be he dead
I know not, but he past to the wild land.
The second was your foe, the sparrow-hawk,
My curse, my nephew—I will not let his name
Slip from my lips if I can help it—he
When I that knew him fierce and turbulent
Refused her to him, then his pride awoke;
And since the proud man often is the mean,
He sow’d a slander in the common ear,
Affirming that his father left him gold,
And in my charge, which was not render’d to him;
Bribed with large promises the men who served
About my person, the more easily
Because my means were somewhat broken into
Thro’ open doors and hospitality;
Raised my own town against me in the night
Before my Enid’s birthday, sack’d my house;
From mine own earldom foully ousted me;
Built that new fort to overawe my friends,
For truly there are those who love me yet;
And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,
Where doubtless he would put me soon to death,
But that his pride too much despises me:
And I myself sometimes despise myself;
For I have let men be, and have their way;

Am much too gentle, have not used my power:
Nor know I whether I be very base
Or very manful, whether very wise
Or very foolish; only this I know,
That whatsoever evil happen to me,
I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb,
But can endure it all most patiently.”

“ Well said, true heart,” replied Geraint, “ but arms:
That if, as I suppose, your nephew fights
In next day’s tourney I may break his pride.”

And Yniol answer’d “ Arms, indeed, but old
And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,
Are mine, and therefore at your asking, yours,
But in this tournament can no man tilt,
Except the lady he loves best be there.
Two forks are fixt into the meadow ground,
And over these is laid a silver wand,
And over that is placed the sparrow-hawk,
The prize of beauty for the fairest there.
And this, what knight soever be in field
Lays claim to for the lady at his side,
And tilts with my good nephew thereupon,
Who being apt at arms and big of bone
Has ever won it for the lady with him,
And toppling over all antagonism
Has earn’d himself the name of sparrow-hawk.
But you, that have no lady, cannot fight.”

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright replied,
Leaning a little toward him, “ Your leave!
Let *me* lay lance in rest, O noble host,
For this dear child, because I never saw,
Tho’ having seen all beauties of our time,
Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair.
And if I fall her name will yet remain
Untarnish’d as before; but if I live,
So aid me Heaven when at mine uttermost
As I will make her truly my true wife.”

Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heart
 Danced in his bosom, seeing better days.
 And looking round he saw not Enid there,
 (Who hearing her own name had slipt away)
 But that old dame, to whom full tenderly
 And fondling all her hand in his he said,
 " Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,
 And best by her that bore her understood.
 Go thou to rest, but ere thou go to rest
 Tell her, and prove her heart toward the Prince."

So spake the kindly-hearted Earl, and she
 With frequent smile and nod departing found,
 Half disarray'd as to her rest, the girl;
 Whom first she kiss'd on either cheek, and then
 On either shining shoulder laid a hand,
 And kept her off and gazed upon her face,
 And told her all their converse in the hall,
 Proving her heart: but never light and shade
 Coursed one another more on open ground
 Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and pale
 Across the face of Enid hearing her;
 While slowly falling as a scale that falls,
 When weight is added only grain by grain,
 Sank her sweet head upon her gentle breast;
 Nor did she lift an eye nor speak a word,
 Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it;
 So moving without answer to her rest
 She found no rest, and ever fail'd to draw
 The quiet night into her blood, but lay
 Contemplating her own unworthiness;
 And when the pale and bloodless east began
 To quicken to the sun, arose, and raised
 Her mother too, and hand in hand they moved
 Down to the meadow where the jousts were held,
 And waited there for Yniol and Geraint.

And thither came the twain, and when Geraint
 Beheld her first in field, awaiting him,
 He felt, were she the prize of bodily force,
 Himself beyond the rest pushing could move

The chair of Idris. Yniol's rusted arms
Were on his princely person, but thro' these
Princelike his bearing shone; and errant knights
And ladies came, and by and by the town
Flow'd in, and settling circled all the lists.
And there they fixt the forks into the ground,
And over these they placed a silver wand,
And over that a golden sparrow-hawk.
Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet blown,
Spake to the lady with him and proclaim'd,
"Advance and take as fairest of the fair,
For I these two years past have won it for thee,
The prize of beauty." Loudly spake the Prince,
"Forbear: there is a worthier," and the knight
With some surprise and thrice as much disdain
Turn'd, and beheld the four, and all his face
Glow'd like the heart of a great fire at Yule,
So burnt he was with passion, crying out,
"Do battle for it then," no more; and thrice
They clash'd together, and thrice they brake their spears.
Then each, dishorsed and drawing, lash'd at each
So often and with such blows, that all the crowd
Wonder'd, and now and then from distant walls
There came a clapping as of phantom hands.
So twice they fought, and twice they breathed, and still
The dew of their great labour, and the blood
Of their strong bodies, flowing, drain'd their force.
But either's force was match'd till Yniol's cry,
"Remember that great insult done the Queen,"
Increased Geraint's, who heaved his blade aloft,
And crack'd the helmet thro', and bit the bone,
And fell'd him, and set foot upon his breast,
And said, "Thy name?" To whom the fallen man
Made answer, groaning, "Edyrn, son of Nudd!
Ashamed am I that I should tell it thee.
My pride is broken: men have seen my fall."
"Then, Edyrn, son of Nudd," replied Geraint,
"These two things shalt thou do, or else thou diest.
First, thou thyself, thy lady, and thy dwarf,
Shalt ride to Arthur's court, and being there,
Crave pardon for that insult done the Queen,

And shalt abide her judgment on it; next,
 Thou shalt give back their earldom to thy kin.
 These two things shalt thou do, or thou shalt die.”
 And Edryn answer’d, “ These things will I do,
 For I have never yet been overthrown,
 And thou hast overthrown me, and my pride
 Is broken down, for Enid sees my fall! ”
 And rising up, he rode to Arthur’s court,
 And there the Queen forgave him easily.
 And being young, he changed himself, and grew
 To hate the sin that seem’d so like his own
 Of Modred, Arthur’s nephew, and fell at last
 In the great battle fighting for the king.

But when the third day from the hunting-morn
 Made a low splendour in the world, and wings
 Moved in her ivy, Enid, for she lay
 With her fair head in the dim-yellow light,
 Among the dancing shadows of the birds,
 Woke and bethought her of her promise given
 No later than last eve to Prince Geraint—
 So bent he seem’d on going the third day,
 He would not leave her, till her promise given—
 To ride with him this morning to the court,
 And there be made known to the stately Queen,
 And there be wedded with all ceremony.
 At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,
 And thought it never yet had look’d so mean.
 For as a leaf in mid-November is
 To what it was in mid-October, seem’d
 The dress that now she look’d on to the dress
 She look’d on ere the coming of Geraint.
 And still she look’d, and still the terror grew
 Of that strange bright and dreadful thing, a court,
 All staring at her in her faded silk:
 And softly to her own sweet heart she said:

“ This noble prince who won our earldom back,
 So splendid in his acts and his attire,
 Sweet heaven, how much I shall discredit him!
 Would he could tarry with us here awhile!

But being so beholden to the Prince,
 It were but little grace in any of us,
 Bent as he seem'd on going this third day,
 To seek a second favour at his hands.
 Yet if he could but tarry a day or two,
 Myself would work eye dim, and finger lame,
 Far liefer than so much discredit him."

And Enid fell in longing for a dress
 All branch'd and flower'd with gold, a costly gift
 Of her good mother, given her on the night
 Before her birthday, three sad years ago,
 That night of fire, when Edyrn sack'd their house,
 And scatter'd all they had to all the winds:
 For while the mother show'd it, and the two
 Were turning and admiring it, the work
 To both appear'd so costly, rose a cry
 That Edyrn's men were on them, and they fled
 With little save the jewels they had on,
 Which being sold and sold had bought them bread:
 And Edyrn's men had caught them in their flight,
 And placed them in this ruin; and she wish'd
 The Prince had found her in her ancient home;
 Then let her fancy flit across the past,
 And roam the goodly places that she knew;
 And last bethought her how she used to watch,
 Near that old home, a pool of golden carp;
 And one was patch'd and blurr'd and lustreless
 Among his burnish'd brethren of the pool;
 And half asleep she made comparison
 Of that and these to her own faded self
 And the gay court, and fell asleep again;
 And dreamt herself was such a faded form
 Among her burnish'd sisters of the pool;
 But this was in the garden of a king;
 And tho' she lay dark in the pool, she knew
 That all was bright; that all about were birds
 Of sunny plume in gilded trellis-work;
 That all the turf was rich in plots that look'd
 Each like a garnet or a turkis in it;
 And lords and ladies of the high court went

In silver tissue talking things of state;
 And children of the king in cloth of gold
 Glanced at the doors or gambol'd down the walks;
 And while she thought "they will not see me," came
 A stately queen whose name was Guinevere,
 And all the children in their cloth of gold
 Ran to her, crying, "if we have fish at all
 Let them be gold; and charge the gardeners now
 To pick the faded creature from the pool,
 And cast it on the mixen that it die."
 And therewithal one came and seized on her,
 And Enid started waking, with her heart
 All overshadow'd by the foolish dream,
 And lo! it was her mother grasping her
 To get her well awake; and in her hand
 A suit of bright apparel, which she laid
 Flat on the couch, and spoke exultingly:

" See here, my child, how fresh the colours look,
 How fast they hold, like colours of a shell
 That keeps the wear and polish of the wave.
 Why not? it never yet was worn, I trow:
 Look on it, child, and tell me if you know it."

And Enid look'd, but all confused at first,
 Could scarce divide it from her foolish dream:
 Then suddenly she knew it and rejoiced,
 And answer'd, " Yea, I know it; your good gift,
 So sadly lost on that unhappy night;
 Your own good gift!" " Yea, surely," said the dame,
 " And gladly given again this happy morn.
 For when the jousts were ended yesterday,
 Went Yniol thro' the town, and everywhere
 He found the sack and plunder of our house
 All scatter'd thro' the houses of the town;
 And gave command that all which once was ours,
 Should now be ours again: and yester-eve,
 While you were talking sweetly with your Prince,
 Came one with this and laid it in my hand,
 For love or fear, or seeking favour of us,
 Because we have our earldom back again.

And yester-eve I would not tell you of it,
But kept it for a sweet surprise at morn.
Yea, truly is it not a sweet surprise?
For I myself unwillingly have worn
My faded suit, as you, my child, have yours,
And howsoever patient, Yniol his.
Ah, dear, he took me from a goodly house,
With store of rich apparel, sumptuous fare,
And page, and maid, and squire, and seneschal,
And pastime both of hawk and hound, and all
That appertains to noble maintenance.
Yea, and he brought me to a goodly house;
But since our fortune slipt from sun to shade,
And all thro' that young traitor, cruel need
Constrain'd us, but a better time has come;
So clothe yourself in this, that better fits
Our mended fortunes and a Prince's bride:
For tho' you won the prize of fairest fair,
And tho' I heard him call you fairest fair,
Let never maiden think, however fair,
She is not fairer in new clothes than old.
And should some great court-lady say, the Prince
Hath pick'd a ragged-robin from the hedge,
And like a madman brought her to the court,
Then were you shamed, and, worse, might shame the Prince
To whom we are beholden; but I know,
When my dear child is set forth at her best,
That neither court nor country, tho' they sought
Thro' all the provinces like those of old
That lighted on Queen Esther, has her match."

Here ceased the kindly mother out of breath;
And Enid listen'd brightening as she lay;
Then, as the white and glittering star of morn
Parts from a bank of snow, and by and by
Slips into golden cloud, the maiden rose,
And left her maiden couch, and robed herself,
Help'd by the mother's careful hand and eye,
Without a mirror, in the gorgeous gown;
Who, after, turn'd her daughter round, and said,
She never yet had seen her half so fair;

And call'd her like that maiden in the tale,
 Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of flowers,
 And sweeter than the bride of Cassivelaun,
 Flur, for whose love the Roman Cæsar first
 Invaded Britain, but we beat him back,
 As this great prince invaded us, and we,
 Not beat him back, but welcomed him with joy.
 And I can scarcely ride with you to court,
 For old am I, and rough the ways and wild;
 But Yniol goes, and I full oft shall dream
 I see my princess as I see her now,
 Clothed with my gift, and gay among the gay.

But while the women thus rejoiced, Geraint
 Woke where he slept in the high hall, and call'd
 For Enid, and when Yniol made report
 Of that good mother making Enid gay
 In such apparel as might well beseem
 His princess, or indeed the stately queen, .
 He answered; “ Earl, entreat her by my love,
 Albeit I give no reason but my wish,
 That she ride with me in her faded silk.”
 Yniol with that hard message went; it fell
 Like flaws in summer laying lusty corn:
 For Enid all abash'd she knew not why,
 Dared not to glance at her good mother's face,
 But silently, in all obedience,
 Her mother silent too, nor helping her,
 Laid from her limbs the costly-broider'd gift,
 And robed them in her ancient suit again,
 And so descended. Never man rejoiced
 More than Geraint to greet her thus attired;
 And glancing all at once as keenly at her,
 As careful robins eye the delver's toil,
 Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall,
 But rested with her sweet face satisfied;
 Then seeing cloud upon the mother's brow,
 Her by both hands he caught, and sweetly said,

“ O my new mother, be not wroth or grieved
 At your new son, for my petition to her.
 When late I left Caerleon, our great Queen,

In words whose echo lasts, they were so sweet,
Made promise, that whatever bride I brought,
Herself would clothe her like the sun in Heaven.
Thereafter, when I reach'd this ruin'd hold,
Beholding one so bright in dark estate,
I vow'd that could I gain her, our kind Queen,
No hand but hers, should make your Enid burst
Sunlike from cloud—and likewise thought perhaps,
That service done so graciously would bind
The two together; for I wish the two
To love each other: how should Enid find
A nobler friend? Another thought I had;
I came among you here so suddenly,
That tho' her gentle presence at the lists
Might well have served for proof that I was loved,
I doubted whether filial tenderness,
Or easy nature, did not let itself
Be moulded by your wishes for her weal;
Or whether some false sense in her own self
Of my contrasting brightness, overbore
Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hall;
And such a sense might make her long for court
And all its dangerous glories: and I thought,
That could I someway prove such force in her
Link'd with such love for me, that at a word
(No reason given her) she could cast aside
A splendour dear to women, new to her,
And therefore dearer; or if not so new,
Yet therefore tenfold dearer by the power
Of intermitted custom; then I felt
That I could rest, a rock in ebbs and flows,
Fixt on her faith. Now, therefore, I do rest,
A prophet certain of my prophecy,
That never shadow of mistrust can cross
Between us. Grant me pardon for my thoughts:
And for my strange petition I will make
Amends hereafter by some gaudy-day,
When your fair child shall wear your costly gift
Beside your own warm hearth, with, on her knees,
Who knows? another gift of the high God,
Which, maybe, shall have learn'd to lisp you thanks.”

He spoke: the mother smiled, but half in tears,
 Then brought a mantle down and wrapt her in it,
 And claspt and kiss'd her, and they rode away.

Now thrice that morning Guinevere had climb'd
 The giant tower, from whose high crest, they say,
 Men saw the goodly hills of Somerset,
 And white sails flying on the yellow sea;
 But not to goodly hill or yellow sea
 Look'd the fair Queen, but up the vale of Usk,
 By the flat meadow, till she saw them come;
 And then descending met them at the gates,
 Embraced her with all welcome as a friend,
 And did her honour as the Prince's bride,
 And clothed her for her bridals like the sun;
 And all that week was old Caerleon gay,
 For by the hands of Dubric, the high saint,
 They twain were wedded with all ceremony.

And this was on the last year's Whitsuntide.
 But Enid ever kept the faded silk,
 Remembering how first he came on her,
 Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,
 And all her foolish fears about the dress,
 And all his journey toward her, as himself
 Had told her, and their coming to the court.

And now this morning when he said to her,
 "Put on your worst and meanest dress," she found
 And took it, and array'd herself therein.

O purblind race of miserable men,
 How many among us at this very hour
 Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,
 By taking true for false, or false for true;
 Here, thro' the feeble twilight of this world
 Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
 That other, where we see as we are seen!

So fared it with Geraint, who issuing forth
 That morning, when they both had got to horse,

Perhaps because he loved her passionately,
And felt that tempest brooding round his heart,
Which, if he spoke at all, would break perforce
Upon a head so dear in thunder, said:
“ Not at my side! I charge you ride before,
Ever a good way on before; and this
I charge you, on your duty as a wife,
Whatever happens, not to speak to me,
No, not a word! ” and Enid was aghast;
And forth they rode, but scarce three paces on,
When crying out “ Effeminate as I am,
I will not fight my way with gilded arms,
All shall be iron; ” he loosed a mighty purse,
Hung at his belt, and hurl’d it toward the squire.
So the last sight that Enid had of home
Was all the marble threshold flashing, strown
With gold and scatter’d coinage, and the squire
Chafing his shoulder: then he cried again,
“ To the wilds! ” and Enid leading down the tracks
Thro’ which he bade her lead him on, they past
The marches, and by bandit-haunted holds,
Gray swamps and pools, waste places of the hern,
And wildernesses, perilous paths, they rode:
Round was their pace at first, but slacken’d soon:
A stranger meeting them had surely thought,
They rode so slowly and they look’d so pale,
That each had suffer’d some exceeding wrong.
For he was ever saying to himself
“ O I that wasted time to tend upon her,
To compass her with sweet observances,
To dress her beautifully and keep her true ”—
And there he broke the sentence in his heart
Abruptly, as a man upon his tongue
May break it, when his passion masters him.
And she was ever praying the sweet heavens
To save her dear lord whole from any wound.
And ever in her mind she cast about
For that unnoticed failing in herself,
Which made him look so cloudy and so cold;
Till the great plover’s human whistle amazed
Her heart, and glancing round the waste she fear’d

In every wavering brake an ambuscade.
 Then thought again “ if there be such in me,
 I might amend it by the grace of heaven,
 If he would only speak and tell me of it.”

But when the fourth part of the day was gone,
 Then Enid was aware of three tall knights
 On horseback, wholly arm'd, behind a rock
 In shadow, waiting for them, caitiffs all;
 And heard one crying to his fellow, “ Look,
 Here comes a laggard hanging down his head,
 Who seems no bolder than a beaten hound;
 Come, we will slay him and will have his horse
 And armour, and his damsels shall be ours.”

Then Enid ponder'd in her heart, and said;
 “ I will go back a little to my lord,
 And I will tell him all their caitiff talk;
 For, be he wroth even to slaying me,
 Far liever by his dear hand had I die,
 Than that my lord should suffer loss or shame.”

Then she went back some paces of return,
 Met his full frown timidly firm, and said:
 “ My lord, I saw three bandits by the rock
 Waiting to fall on you, and heard them boast
 That they would slay you, and possess your horse
 And armour, and your damsels should be theirs.”

He made a wrathful answer. “ Did I wish
 Your warning or your silence? one command
 I laid upon you, not to speak to me,
 And thus you keep it! Well then, look—for now,
 Whether you wish me victory or defeat,
 Long for my life, or hunger for my death,
 Yourself shall see my vigour is not lost.”

Then Enid waited pale and sorrowful,
 And down upon him bare the bandit three.
 And at the midmost charging, Prince Geraint
 Drove the long spear a cubit thro' his breast

And out beyond; and then against his brace
Of comrades, each of whom had broken on him
A lance that splinter'd like an icicle,
Swung from his brand a windy buffet out
Once, twice, to right, to left, and stunn'd the twain
Or slew them, and dismounting like a man
That skins the wild beast after slaying him,
Stript from the three dead wolves of woman born
The three gay suits of armour which they wore,
And let the bodies lie, but bound the suits
Of armour on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, "Drive them on
Before you;" and she drove them thro' the waste.

He follow'd nearer: ruth began to work
Against his anger in him, while he watch'd
The being he loved best in all the world,
With difficulty in mild obedience
Driving them on: he fain had spoken to her,
And loosed in words of sudden fire the wrath
And smoulder'd wrong that burnt him all within;
But evermore it seem'd an easier thing
At once without remorse to strike her dead,
Than to cry "Halt," and to her own bright face
Accuse her of the least immodesty:
And thus tongue-tied, it made him wroth the more
That she *could* speak whom his own ear had heard
Call herself false: and suffering thus he made
Minutes an age: but in scarce longer time
Than at Caerleon the full-tided Usk,
Before he turn to fall seaward again,
Pauses, did Enid, keeping watch, behold
In the first shallow shade of a deep wood,
Before a gloom of stubborn-shafted oaks,
Three other horsemen waiting, wholly arm'd,
Whereof one seem'd far larger than her lord,
And shook her pulses, crying, "Look, a prize!
Three horses and three goodly suits of arms,
And all in charge of whom? a girl: set on."
"Nay," said the second, "yonder comes a knight."

Idylls of the King

The third, "A craven; how he hangs his head."
 The giant answer'd merrily, "Yea, but one?
 Wait here, and when he passes fall upon him."

And Enid ponder'd in her heart and said,
 "I will abide the coming of my lord,
 And I will tell him all their villainy.
 My lord is weary with the fight before,
 And they will fall upon him unawares.
 I needs must disobey him for his good;
 How should I dare obey him to his harm?
 Needs must I speak, and tho' he kill me for it,
 I save a life dearer to me than mine."

And she abode his coming, and said to him
 With timid firmness, "Have I leave to speak?"
 He said, "You take it, speaking," and she spoke.

"There lurk three villains yonder in the wood,
 And each of them is wholly arm'd, and one
 Is larger-limb'd than you are, and they say
 That they will fall upon you while you pass."

To which he flung a wrathful answer back:
 "And if there were an hundred in the wood,
 And every man were larger-limb'd than I,
 And all at once should sally out upon me,
 I swear it would not ruffle me so much
 As you that not obey me. Stand aside,
 And if I fall, cleave to the better man."

And Enid stood aside to wait the event,
 Not dare to watch the combat, only breathe
 Short fits of prayer, at every stroke a breath.
 And he, she dreaded most, bare down upon him.
 Aim'd at the helm, his lance err'd; but Geraint's,
 A little in the late encounter strain'd,
 Struck through the bulky bandit's corselet home,
 And then brake short, and down his enemy roll'd,
 And there lay still; as he that tells the tale,
 Saw once a great piece of a promontory,

That had a sapling growing on it, slip
From the long shore-cliff's windy walls to the beach,
And there lie still, and yet the sapling grew:
So lay the man transfixed. His craven pair
Of comrades, making slowlier at the Prince,
When now they saw their bulwark fallen, stood;
On whom the victor, to confound them more,
Spurr'd with his terrible war-cry; for as one,
That listens near a torrent mountain-brook,
All thro' the crash of the near cataract hears
The drumming thunder of the huger fall
At distance, were the soldiers wont to hear
His voice in battle, and be kindled by it,
And foemen scared, like that false pair who turn'd
Flying, but, overtaken, died the death
Themselves had wrought on many an innocent.

Thereon Geraint, dismounting, pick'd the lance
That pleased him best, and drew from those dead wolves
Their three gay suits of armour, each from each,
And bound them on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, "Drive them on
Before you," and she drove them thro' the wood.

He follow'd nearer still: the pain she had
To keep them in the wild ways of the wood,
Two sets of three laden with jingling arms,
Together, served a little to disedge
The sharpness of that pain about her heart:
And they themselves, like creatures gently born
But into bad hands fall'n, and now so long
By bandits groom'd, prick'd their light ears, and felt
Her low firm voice and tender government.

So thro' the green gloom of the wood they past,
And issuing under open heavens beheld
A little town with towers, upon a rock,
And close beneath, a meadow gemlike chased
In the brown wild, and mowers mowing in it:
And down a rocky pathway from the place

There came a fair-hair'd youth, that in his hand
 Bare victual for the mowers: and Geraint
 Had ruth again on Enid looking pale:
 Then, moving downward to the meadow ground,
 He, when the fair-hair'd youth came by him, said,
 " Friend, let her eat; the damsel is so faint."
 " Yea, willingly," replied the youth; " and you,
 My lord, eat also, tho' the fare is coarse,
 And only meet for mowers;" then set down
 His basket, and dismounting on the sward
 They let the horses graze, and ate themselves.
 And Enid took a little delicately,
 Less having stomach for it than desire
 To close with her lord's pleasure; but Geraint
 Ate all the mowers' victual unawares,
 And when he found all empty, was amazed;
 And " Boy," said he, " I have eaten all, but take
 A horse and arms for guerdon; choose the best."
 He, reddening in extremity of delight,
 " My lord, you overpay me fiftyfold."
 " You will be all the wealthier," cried the Prince.
 " I take it as free gift, then," said the boy,
 " Not guerdon; for myself can easily,
 While your good damsel rests, return, and fetch
 Fresh victual for these mowers of our Earl;
 For these are his, and all the field is his,
 And I myself am his; and I will tell him
 How great a man you are: he loves to know
 When men of mark are in his territory:
 And he will have you to his palace here,
 And serve you costlier than with mowers' fare."

Then said Geraint, " I wish no better fare:
 I never ate with angrier appetite
 Than when I left your mowers dinnerless.
 And into no Earl's palace will I go.
 I know, God knows, too much of palaces!
 And if he want me, let him come to me,
 But hire us some fair chamber for the night,
 And stalling for the horses, and return
 With victual for these men, and let us know."

"Yea, my kind lord," said the glad youth, and went,
Held his head high, and thought himself a knight,
And up the rocky pathway disappear'd,
Leading the horse, and they were left alone.

But when the Prince had brought his errant eyes
Home from the rock, sideways he let them glance
At Enid, where she droopt: his own false doom,
That shadow of mistrust should never cross
Betwixt them, came upon him, and he sigh'd;
Then with another humorous ruth remark'd
The lusty mowers labouring dinnerless,
And watch'd the sun blaze on the turning scythe,
And after nodded sleepily in the heat.
But she, remembering her old ruin'd hall,
And all the windy clamour of the daws
About her hollow turret, pluck'd the grass
There growing longest by the meadow's edge,
And into many a listless annulet,
Now over, now beneath her marriage ring,
Wove and unwove it, till the boy return'd
And told them of a chamber, and they went;
Where, after saying to her, "If you will,
Call for the woman of the house," to which
She answer'd, "Thanks, my lord;" the two remain'd
Apart by all the chamber's width, and mute
As creatures voiceless thro' the fault of birth,
Or two wild men supporters of a shield,
Painted, who stare at open space, nor glance
The one at other, parted by the shield.

On a sudden, many a voice along the street,
And heel against the pavement echoing, burst
Their drowze; and either started while the door,
Push'd from without, drove backward to the wall,
And midmost of a rout of roisterers,
Femininely fair and dissolutely pale,
Her suitor in old years before Geraint,
Enter'd, the wild lord of the place, Limours.
He moving up with pliant courtliness,
Greeted Geraint full face, but stealthily,

In the mid-warmth of welcome and graspt hand,
 Found Enid with the corner of his eye,
 And knew her sitting sad and solitary.
 Then cried Geraint for wine and goodly cheer
 To feed the sudden guest, and sumptuously
 According to his fashion, bad the host
 Call in what men soever were his friends,
 And feast with these in honour of their earl;
 "And care not for the cost; the cost is mine."

And wine and food were brought, and Earl Limours
 Drank till he jested with all ease, and told
 Free tales, and took the word and play'd upon it,
 And made it of two colours; for his talk,
 When wine and free companions kindled him,
 Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem
 Of fifty facets; thus he moved the Prince
 To laughter and his comrades to applause.
 Then, when the Prince was merry, ask'd Limours,
 "Your leave, my lord, to cross the room, and speak
 To your good damsel there who sits apart,
 And seems so lonely?" "My free leave," he said;
 "Get her to speak: she does not speak to me."
 Then rose Limours and looking at his feet,
 Like him who tries the bridge he fears may fail,
 Crost and came near, lifted adoring eyes,
 Bow'd at her side and utter'd whisperingly:

"Enid, the pilot star of my lone life,
 Enid my early and my only love,
 Enid the loss of whom has turn'd me wild—
 What chance is this? how is it I see you here?
 You are in my power at last, are in my power.
 Yet fear me not: I call mine own self wild,
 But keep a touch of sweet civility
 Here in the heart of waste and wilderness.
 I thought, but that your father came between,
 In former days you saw me favourably.
 And if it were so do not keep it back:
 Make me a little happier: let me know it:
 Owe you me nothing for a life half-lost?

Yea, yea, the whole dear debt of all you are.
And, Enid, you and he, I see it with joy—
You sit apart, you do not speak to him,
You come with no attendance, page or maid,
To serve you—does he love you as of old?
For, call it lovers' quarrels, yet I know
Tho' men may bicker with the things they love,
They would not make them laughable in all eyes,
Not while they loved them; and your wretched dress,
A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks
Your story, that this man loves you no more.
Your beauty is no beauty to him now:
A common chance—right well I know it—pall'd—
For I know men: nor will you win him back,
For the man's love once gone never returns.
But here is one who loves you as of old;
With more exceeding passion than of old:
Good, speak the word: my followers ring him round:
He sits unarm'd; I hold a finger up;
They understand: no; I do not mean blood:
Nor need you look so scared at what I say:
My malice is no deeper than a moat,
No stronger than a wall: there is the keep;
He shall not cross us more; speak but the word:
Or speak it not; but then by Him that made me
The one true lover which you ever had,
I will make use of all the power I have.
O pardon me! the madness of that hour,
When first I parted from you, moves me yet.”

At this the tender sound of his own voice
And sweet self-pity, or the fancy of it,
Made his eye moist; but Enid fear'd his eyes,
Moist as they were, wine-heated from the feast;
And answer'd with such craft as women use,
Guilty or guiltless, to stave off a chance
That breaks upon them perilously, and said:

“ Earl, if you love me as in former years,
And do not practise on me, come with morn,
And snatch me from him as by violence;
Leave me to-night: I am weary to the death.”

Low at leave-taking, with his brandish'd plume
Brushing his instep, bow'd the all-amorous Earl,
And the stout Prince bad him a loud good-night.
He moving homeward babbled to his men,
How Enid never loved a man but him,
Nor cared a broken egg-shell for her lord.

But Enid left alone with Prince Geraint,
Debating his command of silence given,
And that she now perforce must violate it,
Held commune with herself, and while she held
He fell asleep, and Enid had no heart
To wake him, but hung o'er him, wholly pleased
To find him yet unwounded after fight,
And hear him breathing low and equally.
Anon she rose, and stepping lightly, heap'd
The pieces of his armour in one place,
All to be there against a sudden need;
Then dozed awhile herself, but overtoil'd
By that day's grief and travel, evermore
Seem'd catching at a rootless thorn, and then
Went slipping down horrible precipices,
And strongly striking out her limbs awoke;
Then thought she heard the wild Earl at the door,
With all his rout of random followers,
Sound on a dreadful trumpet, summoning her;
Which was the red cock shouting to the light,
As the gray dawn stole o'er the dewy world,
And glimmer'd on his armour in the room.
And once again she rose to look at it,
But touch'd it unawares: jangling, the casque
Fell, and he started up and stared at her.
Then breaking his command of silence given,
She told him all that Earl Limours had said,
Except the passage that he loved her not;
Nor left untold the craft herself had used;
But ended with apology so sweet,
Low-spoken, and of so few words, and seem'd
So justified by that necessity,
That tho' he thought "was it for him she wept
In Devon?" he but gave a wrathful groan,

Saying “ your sweet faces make good fellows fools
 And traitors. Call the host and bid him bring
 Charger and palfrey.” So she glided out
 Among the heavy breathings of the house,
 And like a household Spirit at the walls
 Beat, till she woke the sleepers, and return’d:
 Then tending her rough lord, tho’ all unask’d,
 In silence, did him service as a squire;
 Till issuing arm’d he found the host and cried,
 “ Thy reckoning, friend?” and ere he learnt it, “ Take
 Five horses and their armours;” and the host,
 Suddenly honest, answer’d in amaze,
 “ My lord, I scarce have spent the worth of one!”
 “ You will be all the wealthier,” said the Prince,
 And then to Enid, “ Forward! and to-day
 I charge you, Enid, more especially,
 What thing soever you may hear, or see,
 Or fancy (tho’ I count it of small use
 To charge you) that you speak not but obey.”

And Enid answer’d, “ Yea, my lord, I know
 Your wish, and would obey; but riding first,
 I hear the violent threats you do not hear,
 I see the danger which you cannot see:
 Then not to give you warning, that seems hard;
 Almost beyond me: yet I would obey.”

“ Yea so,” said he, “ do it: be not too wise;
 Seeing that you are wedded to a man,
 Not quite mismated with a yawning clown,
 But one with arms to guard his head and yours,
 With eyes to find you out however far,
 And ears to hear you even in his dreams.”

With that he turn’d and look’d as keenly at her
 As careful robins eye the delver’s toil;
 And that within her, which a wanton fool,
 Or hasty judger would have call’d her guilt,
 Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall.
 And Geraint look’d and was not satisfied.

Then forward by a way which, beaten broad,
Led from the territory of false Limours
To the waste earldom of another earl,
Doorm, whom his shaking vassals call'd the Bull,
Went Enid with her sullen follower on.
Once she look'd back, and when she saw him ride
More near by many a rood than yester-morn,
It wellnigh made her cheerful; till Geraint
Waving an angry hand as who should say
“ You watch me,” sadden'd all her heart again.
But while the sun yet beat a dewy blade,
The sound of many a heavily-galloping hoof
Smote on her ear, and turning round she saw
Dust, and the points of lances bicker in it.
Then not to disobey her lord's behest,
And yet to give him warning, for he rode
As if he heard not, moving back she held
Her finger up, and pointing to the dust.
At which the warrior in his obstinacy,
Because she kept the letter of his word
Was in a manner pleased, and turning, stood.
And in the moment after, wild Limours,
Borne on a black horse, like a thunder-cloud
Whose skirts are loosen'd by the breaking storm,
Half ridden off with by the thing he rode,
And all in passion uttering a dry shriek,
Dash'd on Geraint, who closed with him, and bore
Down by the length of lance and arm beyond
The crupper, and so left him stunn'd or dead,
And overthrew the next that follow'd him,
And blindly rush'd on all the rout behind.
But at the flash and motion of the man
They vanish'd panic-stricken, like a shoal
Of darting fish, that on a summer morn
Adown the crystal dykes at Camelot
Come slipping o'er their shadows on the sand,
But if a man who stands upon the brink
But lift a shining hand against the sun,
There is not left the twinkle of a fin
Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower;
So, scared but at the motion of the man,

Fled all the boon companions of the Earl,
And left him lying in the public way;
So vanish friendships only made in wine.

Then like a stormy sunlight smiled Geraint,
Who saw the chargers of the two that fell
Start from their fallen lords, and wildly fly,
Mixt with the flyers. "Horse and man," he said,
"All of one mind and all right-honest friends!
Not a hoof left; and I methinks till now
Was honest—paid with horses and with arms;
I cannot steal or plunder, no nor beg:
And so what say you, shall we strip him there
Your lover? has your palfrey heart enough
To bear his armour? shall we fast, or dine?
No?—then do you, being right honest, pray
That we may meet the horsemen of Earl Doorm,
I too would still be honest." Thus he said:
And sadly gazing on her bridle-reins,
And answering not one word, she led the way.

But as a man to whom a dreadful loss
Falls in a far land and he knows it not,
But coming back he learns it, and the loss
So pains him that he sickens nigh to death;
So fared it with Geraint, who being prick'd
In combat with the follower of Limours,
Bled underneath his armour secretly.
And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife
What ail'd him, hardly knowing it himself,
Till his eye darken'd and his helmet wagg'd
And at a sudden swerving of the road,
Tho' happily down on a bank of grass,
The Prince, without a word, from his horse fell.

And Enid heard the clashing of his fall,
Suddenly came, and at his side all pale
Dismounting, loosed the fastenings of his arms,
Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye
Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,
And tearing off her veil of faded silk

Idylls of the King

Had bared her forehead to the blistering sun,
 And swathed the hurt that drain'd her dear lord's life.
 Then after all was done that hand could do,
 She rested, and her desolation came
 Upon her, and she wept beside the way.

And many past, but none regarded her,
 For in that realm of lawless turbulence,
 A woman weeping for her murder'd mate
 Was cared as much for as a summer shower:
 One took him for a victim of Earl Doorm,
 Nor dared to waste a perilous pity on him:
 Another hurrying past, a man-at-arms,
 Rode on a mission to the bandit Earl;
 Half whistling and half singing a coarse song,
 He drove the dust against her veilless eyes:
 Another, flying from the wrath of Doorm
 Before an ever-fancied arrow, made
 The long way smoke beneath him in his fear;
 At which her palfrey whinnying lifted heel,
 And scour'd into the coppices and was lost,
 While the great charger stood, grieved like a man.

But at the point of noon the huge Earl Doorm,
 Broad-faced with under-fringe of russet beard,
 Bound on a foray, rolling eyes of prey,
 Came riding with a hundred lances up;
 But ere he came, like one that hails a ship,
 Cried out with a big voice, "What, is he dead?"
 "No, no, not dead!" she answered in all haste.
 "Would some of your kind people take him up,
 And bear him hence out of this cruel sun:
 Most sure am I, quite sure, he is not dead."

Then said Earl Doorm; "Well, if he be not dead,
 Why wail you for him thus? you seem a child.
 And be he dead, I count you for a fool;
 Your wailing will not quicken him: dead or not,
 You mar a comely face with idiot tears.
 Yet, since the face *is* comely—some of you,
 Here, take him up, and bear him to our hall:
 An if he live, we will have him of our band;

And if he die, why earth has earth enough
To hide him. See ye take the charger too,
A noble one."

He spake, and past away,
But left two brawny spearmen, who advanced,
Each growling like a dog, when his good bone
Seems to be pluck'd at by the village boys
Who love to vex him eating, and he fears
To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it,
Gnawing and growling: so the ruffians growl'd,
Fearing to lose, and all for a dead man,
Their chance of booty from the morning's raid;
Yet raised and laid him on a litter-bier,
Such as they brought upon their forays out
For those that might be wounded; laid him on it
All in the hollow of his shield, and took
And bore him to the naked hall of Doorm,
(His gentle charger following him unled)
And cast him and the bier in which he lay
Down on an oaken settle in the hall,
And then departed, hot in haste to join
Their luckier mates, but growling as before,
And cursing their lost time, and the dead man,
And their own Earl, and their own souls, and her.
They might as well have blest her: she was deaf
To blessing or to cursing save from one.

So for long hours sat Enid by her lord,
There in the naked hall, propping his head,
And chafing his pale hands, and calling to him.
And at the last he waken'd from his swoon,
And found his own dear bride propping his head,
And chafing his faint hands, and calling to him;
And felt the warm tears falling on his face;
And said to his own heart, "she weeps for me:"
And yet lay still, and feign'd himself as dead,
That he might prove her to the uttermost,
And say to his own heart "she weeps for me."

But in the falling afternoon return'd
The huge Earl Doorm with plunder to the hall.

His lusty spearmen follow'd him with noise:
Each hurling down a heap of things that rang
Against the pavement, cast his lance aside,
And doff'd his helm: and then there flutter'd in,
Half-bold, half-frighted, with dilated eyes,
A tribe of women, dress'd in many hues,
And mingled with the spearmen; and Earl Doorm
Struck with a knife's haft hard against the board,
And call'd for flesh and wine to feed his spears.
And men brought in whole hogs and quarter beeves,
And all the hall was dim with steam of flesh:
And none spake word, but all sat down at once,
And ate with tumult in the naked hall,
Feeding like horses when you hear them feed;
Till Enid shrank far back into herself,
To shun the wild ways of the lawless tribe.
But when Earl Doorm had eaten all he would,
He roll'd his eyes about the hall, and found
A damsel drooping in a corner of it.
Then he remember'd her, and how she wept;
And out of her there came a power upon him;
And rising, on the sudden he said, " Eat!
I never yet beheld a thing so pale.
God's curse, it makes me mad to see you weep.
Eat! Look yourself. Good luck had your good man,
For were I dead who is it would weep for me?
Sweet lady, never since I first drew breath,
Have I beheld a lily like yourself.
And so there lived some colour in your cheek,
There is not one among my gentlewomen
Were fit to wear your slipper for a glove.
But listen to me, and by me be ruled,
And I will do the thing I have not done,
For you shall share my earldom with me, girl,
And we will live like two birds in one nest,
And I will fetch you forage from all fields,
For I compel all creatures to my will."

He spoke: the brawny spearman let his cheek
Bulge with the unswallow'd piece, and turning stared;
While some, whose souls the old serpent long had drawn

Down, as the worm draws in the wither'd leaf
 And makes it earth, hiss'd each at other's ear
 What shall not be recorded—women they,
 Women, or what had been those gracious things,
 But now desired the humbling of their best,
 Yea, would have helped him to it: and all at once
 They hated her, who took no thought of them,
 But answer'd in low voice, her meek head yet
 Drooping, “ I pray you of your courtesy,
 He being as he is, to let me be.”

She spake so low he hardly heard her speak,
 But like a mighty patron, satisfied
 With what himself had done so graciously,
 Assumed that she had thanked him, adding, “ yea,
 Eat and be glad, for I account you mine.”

She answer'd meekly, “ How should I be glad
 Henceforth in all the world at anything,
 Until my lord arise and look upon me? ”

Here the huge Earl cried out upon her talk,
 As all but empty heart and weariness
 And sickly nothing; suddenly seized on her,
 And bare her by main violence to the board,
 And thrust the dish before her, crying, “ Eat.”

“ No, no,” said Enid, vext, “ I will not eat,
 Till yonder man upon the bier arise,
 And eat with me.” “ Drink, then,” he answer'd. “ Here! ”
 (And fill'd a horn with wine, and held it to her,)
 “ Lo! I, myself, when flush'd with fight, or hot,
 God's curse, with anger—often I myself,
 Before I well have drunken, scarce can eat:
 Drink therefore, and the wine will change your will.”

“ Not so,” she cried, “ by Heaven, I will not drink,
 Till my dear lord arise and bid me do it,
 And drink with me; and if he rise no more,
 I will not look at wine until I die.”

At this he turn'd all red and paced his hall,
 Now gnaw'd his under, now his upper lip,
 And coming up close to her, said at last;
 " Girl, for I see you scorn my courtesies,
 Take warning: yonder man is surely dead;
 And I compel all creatures to my will.
 Not eat nor drink? And wherefore wail for one,
 Who put your beauty to this flout and scorn
 By dressing it in rags? Amazed am I,
 Beholding how you butt against my wish,
 That I forbear you thus: cross me no more.
 At least put off to please me this poor gown,
 This silken rag, this beggar-woman's weed:
 I love that beauty should go beautifully:
 For see you not my gentlewomen here,
 How gay, how suited to the house of one,
 Who loves that beauty should go beautifully!
 Rise therefore; robe yourself in this: obey."

He spoke, and one among his gentlewomen
 Display'd a splendid silk of foreign loom,
 Where like a shoaling sea the lovely blue
 Play'd into green, and thicker down the front
 With jewels than the sward with drops of dew,
 When all night long a cloud clings to the hill,
 And with the dawn ascending lets the day
 Strike where it clung: so thickly shone the gems.

But Enid answer'd, harder to be moved
 Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,
 With life-long injuries burning unavenged,
 And now their hour has come; and Enid said:

" In this poor gown my dear lord found me first,
 And loved me serving in my father's hall:
 In this poor gown I rode with him to court,
 And there the Queen array'd me like the sun:
 In this poor gown he bade me clothe myself,
 When now we rode upon this fatal quest
 Of honour, where no honour can be gain'd :
 And this poor gown I will not cast aside

Until himself arise a living man,
And bid me cast it. I have griefs enough:
Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be:
I never loved, can never love but him:
Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,
He being as he is, to let me be."

Then strode the brute Earl up and down his hall,
And took his russet beard between his teeth;
Last, coming up quite close, and in his mood
Crying, "I count it of no more avail,
Dame, to be gentle than ungentele with you;
Take my salute," unknightly with flat hand,
However lightly, smote her on the cheek.

Then Enid, in her utter helplessness,
And since she thought, "he had not dared to do it,
Except he surely knew my lord was dead,"
Sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry,
As of a wild thing taken in the trap,
Which sees the trapper coming thro' the wood.

This heard Geraint, and grasping at his sword,
(It lay beside him in the hollow shield)
Made but a single bound, and with a sweep of it
Shore thro' the swarthy neck, and like a ball
The russet-bearded head roll'd on the floor.
So died Earl Doorm by him he counted dead.
And all the men and women in the hall
Rose when they saw the dead man rise, and fled
Yelling as from a spectre, and the two
Were left alone together, and he said:

"Enid, I have used you worse than that dead man;
Done you more wrong: we both have undergone
That trouble which has left me thrice your own:
Henceforward I will rather die than doubt.
And here I lay this penance on myself,
Not, tho' mine own ears heard you yester-morn—
You thought me sleeping, but I heard you say,
I heard you say, that you were no true wife:

I swear I will not ask your meaning in it:
 I do believe yourself against yourself,
 And will henceforward rather die than doubt."

And Enid could not say one tender word,
 She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart:
 She only prayed him, " Fly, they will return
 And slay you; fly, your charger is without,
 My palfrey lost." " Then, Enid, shall you ride
 Behind me." " Yea," said Enid, " let us go."
 And moving out they found the stately horse,
 Who now no more a vassal to the thief,
 But free to stretch his limbs in lawful fight,
 Neigh'd with all gladness as they came, and stoop'd
 With a low whinny toward the pair: and she
 Kiss'd the white star upon his noble front,
 Glad also; then Geraint upon the horse
 Mounted, and reach'd a hand, and on his foot
 She set her own and climb'd; he turn'd his face
 And kiss'd her climbing, and she cast her arms
 About him, and at once they rode away.

And never yet, since high in Paradise
 O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
 Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind
 Than lived thro' her, who in that perilous hour
 Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,
 And felt him hers again: she did not weep,
 But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist
 Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
 Before the useful trouble of the rain:
 Yet not so misty were her meek blue eyes
 As not to see before them on the path,
 Right in the gateway of the bandit hold,
 A knight of Arthur's court, who laid his lance
 In rest, and made as if to fall upon him.
 Then, fearing for his hurt and loss of blood,
 She, with her mind all full of what had chanced,
 Shriek'd to the stranger, " Slay not a dead man!"
 " The voice of Enid," said the knight; but she,
 Beholding it was Edyrn son of Nudd,

Was moved so much the more, and shrick'd again,
"O cousin, slay not him who gave you life."
And Edyrn moving frankly forward spake:
"My lord Geraint, I greet you with all love;
I took you for a bandit knight of Doorm;
And fear not, Enid, I should fall upon him,
Who love you, Prince, with something of the love
Wherewith we love the Heaven that chastens us.
For once, when I was up so high in pride
That I was halfway down the slope to Hell,
By overthrowing me you threw me higher.
Now, made a knight of Arthur's Table Round,
And since I knew this Earl, when I myself
Was half a bandit in my lawless hour,
I come the mouthpiece of our King to Doorm
(The King is close behind me) bidding him
Disband himself and scatter all his powers,
Submit, and hear the judgment of the King."

"He hears the judgment of the King of kings,"
Cried the wan Prince; "and lo the powers of Doorm
Are scatter'd," and he pointed to the field,
Where, huddled here and there on mound and knoll,
Were men and women staring and aghast,
While some yet fled; and then he plainlier told
How the huge Earl lay slain within his hall.
But when the knight besought him, "Follow me,
Prince, to the camp, and in the King's own ear
Speak what has chanced; you surely have endured
Strange chances here alone;" that other flush'd,
And hung his head, and halted in reply,
Fearing the mild face of the blameless King,
And after madness acted question ask'd:
Till Edyrn crying, "If you will not go
To Arthur, then will Arthur come to you,"
"Enough," he said, "I follow," and they went.
But Enid in their going had two fears,
One from the bandit scatter'd in the field,
And one from Edyrn. Every now and then,
When Edyrn rein'd his charger at her side,
She shrank a little. In a hollow land,

From which old fires have broken, men may fear
Fresh fire and ruin. He, perceiving, said:

" Fair and dear cousin, you that most had cause
To fear me, fear no longer, I am changed.
Yourself were first the blameless cause to make
My nature's prideful sparkle in the blood
Break into furious flame; being repulsed
By Yniol and yourself, I schemed and wrought
Until I overturn'd him; then set up
(With one main purpose ever at my heart)
My haughty jousts, and took a paramour;
Did her mock-honour as the fairest fair,
And, toppling over all antagonism,
So wax'd in pride, that I believed myself
Unconquerable, for I was well-nigh mad:
And, but for my main purpose in these jousts,
I should have slain your father, seized yourself.
I lived in hope that sometime you would come
To these my lists with him whom best you loved;
And there, poor cousin, with your meek blue eyes,
The truest eyes that ever answer'd heaven,
Behold me overturn and trample on him.
Then, had you cried, or knelt, or pray'd to me,
I should not less have kill'd him. And you came,—
But once you came,—and with your own true eyes
Beheld the man you loved (I speak as one
Speaks of a service done him) overthrow
My proud self, and my purpose three years old,
And set his foot upon me, and give me life.
There was I broken down; there was I saved:
Tho' thence I rode all-shamed, hating the life
He gave me, meaning to be rid of it.
And all the penance the Queen laid upon me
Was but to rest awhile within her court;
Where first as sullen as a beast new-caged,
And waiting to be treated like a wolf,
Because I knew my deeds were known, I found,
Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn,
Such fine reserve and noble reticence,
Manners so kind, yet stately, such a grace

Of tenderest courtesy, that I began
To glance behind me at my former life,
And find that it had been the wolf's indeed:
And oft I talk'd with Dubric, the high saint,
Who, with mild heat of holy oratory,
Subdued me somewhat to that gentleness,
Which, when it weds with manhood, makes a man.
And you were often there about the Queen,
But saw me not, or mark'd not if you saw;
Nor did I care or dare to speak with you,
But kept myself aloof till I was changed;
And fear not, cousin; I am changed indeed."

He spoke, and Enid easily believed,
Like simple noble natures, credulous
Of what they long for, good in friend or foe,
There most in those who most have done them ill.
And when they reach'd the camp the King himself
Advanced to greet them, and beholding her
Tho' pale, yet happy, ask'd her not a word,
But went apart with Edyrn, whom he held
In converse for a little, and return'd,
And, gravely smiling, lifted her from horse,
And kiss'd her with all pureness, brother-like,
And show'd an empty tent allotted her,
And glancing for a minute, till he saw her
Pass into it, turn'd to the Prince, and said:

"Prince, when of late you pray'd me for my leave
To move to your own land, and there defend
Your marches, I was prick'd with some reproof,
As one that let foul wrong stagnate and be,
By having look'd too much thro' alien eyes,
And wrought too long with delegated hands,
Not used mine own: but now behold me come
To cleanse this common sewer of all my realm,
With Edyrn and with others: have you look'd
At Edyrn? have you seen how nobly changed?
This work of his is great and wonderful.
His very face with change of heart is changed.
The world will not believe a man repents:

And this wise world of ours is mainly right.
 Full seldom *does* a man repent, or use
 Both grace and will to pick the vicious quitch
 Of blood and custom wholly out of him,
 And make all clean, and plant himself afresh.
 Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart
 As I will weed this land before I go.
 I, therefore, made him of our Table Round,
 Not rashly, but have proved him everyway
 One of our noblest, our most valorous,
 Sanest and most obedient: and indeed
 This work of Edyrn wrought upon himself
 After a life of violence, seems to me
 A thousand-fold more great and wonderful
 Than if some knight of mine, risking his life,
 My subject with my subjects under him,
 Should make an onslaught single on a realm
 Of robbers, tho' he slew them one by one,
 And were himself nigh wounded to the death."

So spake the King; low bow'd the Prince, and felt
 His work was neither great nor wonderful,
 And past to Enid's tent; and thither came
 The King's own leech to look into his hurt;
 And Enid tended on him there; and there
 Her constant motion round him, and the breath
 Of her sweet tendance hovering over him,
 Fill'd all the genial courses of his blood
 With deeper and with ever deeper love,
 As the south-west that blowing Bala lake
 Fills all the sacred Dee. So past the days.

But while Geraint lay healing of his hurt,
 The blameless King went forth and cast his eyes
 On whom his father Uther left in charge
 Long since, to guard the justice of the King:
 He look'd and found them wanting; and as now
 Men weed the white horse on the Berkshire hills
 To keep him bright and clean as heretofore,
 He rooted out the slothful officer
 Or guilty, which for bribe had wink'd at wrong,

And in their chairs set up a stronger race
With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand men
To till the wastes, and moving everywhere
Clear'd the dark places and let in the law,
And broke the bandit holds and cleansed the land.

Then, when Geraint was whole again, they past
With Arthur to Caerleon upon Usk.
There the great Queen once more embraced her friend,
And clothed her in apparel like the day.
And tho' Geraint could never take again
That comfort from their converse which he took
Before the Queen's fair name was breathed upon,
He rested well content that all was well.
Thence after tarrying for a space they rode,
And fifty knights rode with them to the shores
Of Severn, and they past to their own land.
And there he kept the justice of the King
So vigorously yet mildly, that all hearts
Applauded, and the spiteful whisper died:
And being ever foremost in the chase,
And victor at the tilt and tournament,
They call'd him the great Prince and man of men.
But Enid, whom her ladies loved to call
Enid the Fair, a grateful people named
Enid the Good; and in their halls arose
The cry of children, Enids and Geraints
Of times to be; nor did he doubt her more
But rested in her fæalty, till he crown'd
A happy life with a fair death, and fell
Against the heathen of the Northern Sea
In battle, fighting for the blameless King.

MERLIN AND VIVIEN

A STORM was coming, but the winds were still,
And in the wild woods of Broceliande,
Before an oak, so hollow huge and old
It look'd a tower of ruin'd masonwork,
At Merlin's feet the wily Vivien lay.

The wily Vivien stole from Arthur's court:
She hated all the knights, and heard in thought
Their lavish comment when her name was named.
For once, when Arthur walking all alone,
Vext at a rumour rife about the Queen,
Had met her, Vivien, being greeted fair,
Would fain have wrought upon his cloudy mood
With reverent eyes mock-loyal, shaken voice,
And flutter'd adoration, and at last
With dark sweet hints of some who prized him more
Than who should prize him most; at which the King
Had gazed upon her blankly and gone by:
But one had watch'd, and had not held his peace:
It made the laughter of an afternoon
That Vivien should attempt the blameless King.
And after that, she set herself to gain
Him, the most famous man of all those times,
Merlin, who knew the range of all their arts,
Had built the King his havens, ships, and halls,
Was also Bard, and knew the starry heavens;
The people called him Wizard; whom at first
She play'd about with slight and sprightly talk,
And vivid smiles, and faintly-venom'd points
Of slander, glancing here and grazing there;
And yielding to his kindlier moods, the Seer
Would watch her at her petulance, and play,
Ev'n when they seem'd unloveable, and laugh
As those that watch a kitten; thus he grew

Tolerant of what he half disdain'd, and she,
 Perceiving that she was but half disdain'd,
 Began to break her sports with graver fits,
 Turn red or pale, would often when they met
 Sigh fully, or all-silent gaze upon him
 With such a fixt devotion, that the old man,
 Tho' doubtful, felt the flattery, and at times
 Would flatter his own wish in age for love,
 And half believe her true: for thus at times
 He waver'd; but that other clung to him,
 Fixt in her will, and so the seasons went.
 Then fell upon him a great melancholy;
 And leaving Arthur's court he gain'd the beach;
 There found a little boat, and stept into it;
 And Vivien follow'd, but he mark'd her not.
 She took the helm and he the sail; the boat
 Drave with a sudden wind across the deeps,
 And touching Breton sands, they disembark'd.
 And then she follow'd Merlin all the way,
 Ev'n to the wild woods of Broceliande.
 For Merlin once had told her of a charm,
 The which if any wrought on any one
 With woven paces and with waving arms,
 The man so wrought on ever seem'd to lie
 Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower,
 From which was no escape for evermore;
 And none could find that man for evermore,
 Nor could he see but him who wrought the charm
 Coming and going, and he lay as dead
 And lost to life and use and name and fame.
 And Vivien ever sought to work the charm
 Upon the great Enchanter of the Time,
 As fancying that her glory would be great
 According to his greatness whom she quench'd.

There lay she all her length and kiss'd his feet,
 As if in deepest reverence and in love.
 A twist of gold was round her hair; a robe
 Of samite without price, that more exprest
 Than hid her, clung about her lissome limbs,
 In colour like the satin-shining palm

On sallows in the windy gleams of March:
And while she kiss'd them, crying, "Trample me,
Dear feet, that I have follow'd thro' the world,
And I will pay you worship; tread me down
And I will kiss you for it;" he was mute:
So dark a forethought roll'd about his brain,
As on a dull day in an Ocean cave
The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall
In silence: wherefore, when she lifted up
A face of sad appeal, and spake and said,
"O Merlin, do you love me?" and again,
"O Merlin, do you love me?" and once more,
"Great Master, do you love me?" he was mute.
And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,
Writhed toward him,滑ed up his knee and sat,
Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet
Together, curved an arm about his neck,
Clung like a snake; and letting her left hand
Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,
Made with her right a comb of pearl to part
The lists of such a beard as youth gone out
Had left in ashes: then he spoke and said,
Not looking at her, "who are wise in love
Love most, say least," and Vivien answer'd quick,
"I saw the little elf-god eyeless once
In Arthur's arras hall at Camelot:
But neither eyes nor tongue—O stupid child!
Yet you are wise who say it; let me think
Silence is wisdom: I am silent then
And ask no kiss;" then adding all at once,
"And lo, I clothe myself with wisdom," drew
The vast and shaggy mantle of his beard
Across her neck and bosom to her knee,
And call'd herself a gilded summer fly
Caught in a great old tyrant spider's web,
Who meant to eat her up in that wild wood
Without one word. So Vivien call'd herself,
But rather seem'd a lovely baleful star
Veil'd in gray vapour; till he sadly smiled:
"To what request for what strange boon," he said,
"Are these your pretty tricks and fooleries,

O Vivien, the preamble? yet my thanks,
For these have broken up my melancholy."

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily,
"What, O my Master, have you found your voice?
I bid the stranger welcome. Thanks at last!
But yesterday you never open'd lip,
Except indeed to drink: no cup had we:
In mine own lady palms I cull'd the spring
That gather'd trickling dropwise from the cleft,
And made a pretty cup of both my hands
And offer'd you it kneeling: then you drank
And knew no more, nor gave me one poor word;
O no more thanks than might a goat have given
With no more sign of reverence than a beard.
And when we halted at that other well,
And I was faint to swooning, and you lay
Foot-gilt with all the blossom-dust of those
Deep meadows we had traversed, did you know
That Vivien bathed your feet before her own?
And yet no thanks: and all thro' this wild wood
And all this morning when I fondled you:
Boon, yes, there was a boon, one not so strange—
How had I wrong'd you? surely you are wise,
But such a silence is more wise than kind."

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and said;
"O did you never lie upon the shore,
And watch the curl'd white of the coming wave
Glass'd in the slippery sand before it breaks?
Ev'n such a wave, but not so pleasurable,
Dark in the glass of some presageful mood,
Had I for three days seen, ready to fall.
And then I rose and fled from Arthur's court
To break the mood. You follow'd me unask'd;
And when I look'd, and saw you following still,
My mind involved yourself the nearest thing
In that mind-mist: for shall I tell you truth?
You seem'd that wave about to break upon me
And sweep me from my hold upon the world,
My use and name and fame. Your pardon, child.

Your pretty sports have brighten'd all again.
And ask your boon, for boon I owe you thrice,
Once for wrong done you by confusion, next
For thanks it seems till now neglected, last
For these your dainty gambols: wherefore ask;
And take this boon so strange and not so strange.”

And Vivien answer'd smiling mournfully;
“ O not so strange as my long asking it,
Nor yet so strange as you yourself are strange,
Nor half so strange as that dark mood of yours.
I ever fear'd you were not wholly mine;
And see, yourself have own'd you did me wrong.
The people call you prophet: let it be:
But not of those that can expound themselves.
Take Vivien for expounder; she will call
That three-days-long presageful gloom of yours
No presage, but the same mistrustful mood
That makes you seem less noble than yourself,
Whenever I have ask'd this very boon,
Now ask'd again: for see you not, dear love,
That such a mood as that, which lately gloom'd
Your fancy when you saw me following you,
Must make me fear still more you are not mine,
Must make me yearn still more to prove you mine,
And make me wish still more to learn this charm
Of woven paces and of waving hands,
As proof of trust. O, Merlin, teach it me.
The charm so taught will charm us both to rest.
For, grant me some slight power upon your fate,
I, feeling that you felt me worthy trust,
Should rest and let you rest, knowing you mine.
And therefore be as great as you are named,
Not muffled round with selfish reticence.
How hard you look and how denyingly!
O, if you think this wickedness in me,
That I should prove it on you unawares,
To make you lose your use and name and fame,
That makes me most indignant; then our bond
Had best be loosed for ever: but think or not,
By Heaven that hears I tell you the clean truth,

As clean as blood of babes, as white as milk:
O Merlin, may this earth, if ever I,
If these unwitty wandering wits of mine,
Ev'n in the jumbled rubbish of a dream,
Have tript on such conjectural treachery—
May this hard earth cleave to the Nadir hell
Down, down, and close again, and nip me flat,
If I be such a traitress. Yield my boon,
Till which I scarce can yield you all I am;
And grant my re-reiterated wish,
The great proof of your love: because I think,
However wise, you hardly know me yet.”

And Merlin loosed his hand from hers and said,
“I never was less wise, however wise,
Too curious Vivien, tho’ you talk of trust,
Than when I told you first of such a charm.
Yea, if you talk of trust I tell you this,
Too much I trusted, when I told you that,
And stirr’d this vice in you which ruin’d man
Thro’ woman the first hour; for howsoe’er
In children a great curiousness be well,
Who have to learn themselves and all the world,
In you, that are no child, for still I find
Your face is practised, when I spell the lines,
I call it,—well, I will not call it vice:
But since you name yourself the sumner fly,
I well could wish a cobweb for the gnat,
That settles, beaten back, and beaten back
Settles, till one could yield for weariness:
But since I will not yield to give you power
Upon my life and use and name and fame,
Why will you never ask some other boon?
Yea, by God’s rood, I trusted you too much.”

And Vivien, like the tenderest-hearted maid
That ever bided tryst at village stile,
Made answer, either eyelid wet with tears.
“Nay, master, be not wrathful with your maid;
Caress her: let her feel herself forgiven
Who feels no heart to ask another boon.

Idylls of the King

I think you hardly know the tender rhyme
Of ' trust me not at all or all in all.'

I heard the great Sir Lancelot sing it once,
And it shall answer for me. Listen to it.

' In Love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours,
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers;
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.

' It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all.

' The little rift within the lover's lute,
Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,
That rotting inward slowly moulders all.

' It is not worth the keeping: let it go:
But shall it? answer, darling, answer, no.
And trust me not at all or all in all.'

O, master, do you love my tender rhyme?"

And Merlin look'd and half believed her true,
So tender was her voice, so fair her face,
So sweetly gleam'd her eyes behind her tears
Like sunlight on the plain behind a shower:
And yet he answer'd half indignantly.

" Far other was the song that once I heard
By this huge oak, sung nearly where we sit:
For here we met, some ten or twelve of us,
To chase a creature that was current then
In these wild woods, the hart with golden horns.
It was the time when first the question rose
About the founding of a Table Round,
This was to be, for love of God and men
And noble deeds, the flower of all the world.
And each incited each to noble deeds.
And while we waited, one, the youngest of us,
We could not keep him silent, out he flash'd,

And into such a song, such fire for fame,
 Such trumpet-blowings in it, coming down
 To such a stern and iron-clashing close,
 That when he stopt we long'd to hurl together,
 And should have done it; but the beauteous beast
 Scared by the noise upstarted at our feet,
 And like a silver shadow slipt away
 Thro' the dim land; and all day long we rode
 Thro' the dim land against a rushing wind,
 That glorious roundel echoing in our ears,
 And chased the flashes of his golden horns
 Until they vanish'd by the fairy well
 That laughs at iron—as our warriors did—
 Where children cast their pins and nails, and cry,
 ‘Laugh, little well,’ but touch it with a sword,
 It buzzes wildly round the point; and there
 We lost him: such a noble song was that.
 But, Vivien, when you sang me that sweet rhyme,
 I felt as tho’ you knew this cursed charm,
 Were proving it on me, and that I lay
 And felt them slowly ebbing, name and fame.”

And Vivien answer'd smiling mournfully;
 “O mine have ebb'd away for evermore,
 And all thro' following you to this wild wood,
 Because I saw you sad, to comfort you.
 Lo now, what hearts have men! they never mount
 As high as woman in her selfless mood.
 And touching fame, howe'er you scorn my song
 Take one verse more—the lady speaks it—this:

‘ My name, once mine, now thine, is closelier mine,
 For fame, could fame be mine, that fame were thine,
 And shame, could shame be thine, that shame were mine.
 So trust me not at all or all in all.’

“ Says she not well? and there is more—this rhyme
 Is like the fair pearl-necklace of the Queen,
 That burst in dancing, and the pearls were spilt;
 Some lost, some stolen, some as relics kept.
 But nevermore the same two sister pearls

Ran down the silken thread to kiss each other
 On her white neck—so is it with this rhyme:
 It lives dispersedly in many hands,
 And every minstrel sings it differently;
 Yet is there one true line, the pearl of pearls;
 ‘ Man dreams of Fame while woman wakes to love.’
 True: Love, tho’ Love were of the grossest, carves
 A portion from the solid present, eats
 And uses, careless of the rest; but Fame,
 The Fame that follows death is nothing to us;
 And what is Fame in life but half-disfame,
 And counterchanged with darkness? you yourself
 Know well that Envy calls you Devil’s son,
 And since you seem the Master of all Art,
 They fain would make you Master of all Vice.”

And Merlin lock’d his hand in hers and said,
 “ I once was looking for a magic weed,
 And found a fair young squire who sat alone,
 Had carved himself a knightly shield of wood,
 And then was painting on it fancied arms,
 Azure, an Eagle rising or, the Sun
 In dexter chief; the scroll ‘ I follow fame.’
 And speaking not, but leaning over him,
 I took his brush and blotted out the bird,
 And made a Gardener putting in a graff,
 With this for motto, ‘ Rather use than fame.’
 You should have seen him blush; but afterwards
 He made a stalwart knight. O Vivien,
 For you, methinks you think you love me well;
 For me, I love you somewhat; rest: and Love
 Should have some rest and pleasure in himself,
 Not ever be too curious for a boon,
 Too prurient for a proof against the grain
 Of him you say you love: but Fame with men,
 Being but ampler means to serve mankind,
 Should have small rest or pleasure in herself,
 But work as vassal to the larger love,
 That dwarfs the petty love of one to one.
 Use gave me Fame at first, and Fame again
 Increasing gave me use. Lo, there my boon!

What other? for men sought to prove me vile,
Because I wish'd to give them greater minds:
And then did Envy call me Devil's son:
The sick weak beast seeking to help herself
By striking at her better, miss'd, and brought
Her own claw back, and wounded her own heart.
Sweet were the days when I was all unknown,
But when my name was lifted up, the storm
Broke on the mountain and I cared not for it.
Right well know I that Fame is half-disfame,
Yet needs must work my work. That other fame,
To one at least, who hath not children, vague,
To cackle of the unborn about the grave,
I cared not for it: a single misty star,
Which is the second in a line of stars
That seem a sword beneath a belt of three,
I never gazed upon it but I dreamt
Of some vast charm concluded in that star
To make fame nothing. Wherefore, if I fear,
Giving you power upon me thro' this charm,
That you might play me falsely, having power,
However well you think you love me now
(As sons of kings loving in pupillage
Have turn'd to tyrants when they came to power)
I rather dread the loss of use than fame;
If you—and not so much from wickedness,
As some wild turn of anger, or a mood
Of overstrain'd affection, it may be,
To keep me all to your own self, or else
A sudden spurt of woman's jealousy,
Should try this charm on whom you say you love."

And Vivien answer'd smiling as in wrath.
" Have I not sworn? I am not trusted. Good!
Well, hide it, hide it; I shall find it out;
And being found take heed of Vivien.
A woman and not trusted, doubtless I
Might feel some sudden turn of anger born
Of your misfaith; and your fine epithet
Is accurate too, for this full love of mine
Without the full heart back may merit well

Your term of overstrain'd. So used as I,
 My daily wonder is, I love at all.
 And as to woman's jealousy, O why not?
 O to what end, except a jealous one,
 And one to make me jealous if I love,
 Was this fair charm invented by yourself?
 I well believe that all about this world
 You cage a buxom captive here and there,
 Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower
 From which is no escape for evermore."

Then the great Master merrily answer'd her.
 " Full many a love in loving youth was mine,
 I needed then no charm to keep them mine
 But youth and love; and that full heart of yours
 Whereof you prattle, may now assure you mine;
 So live uncharm'd. For those who wrought it first,
 The wrist is parted from the hand that waved,
 The feet unmortised from their ankle-bones
 Who paced it, ages back: but will you hear
 The legend as in guerdon for your rhyme?

" There lived a king in the most Eastern East,
 Less old than I, yet older, for my blood
 Hath earnest in it of far springs to be.
 A tawny pirate anchor'd in his port,
 Whose bark had plunder'd twenty nameless isles;
 And passing one, at the high peep of dawn,
 He saw two cities in a thousand boats
 All fighting for a woman on the sea.
 And pushing his black craft among them all,
 He lightly scatter'd theirs and brought her off,
 With loss of half his people arrow-slain;
 A maid so smooth, so white, so wonderful,
 They said a light came from her when she moved:
 And since the pirate would not yield her up,
 The King impaled him for his piracy;
 Then made her Queen: but those isle-nurtur'd eyes
 Waged such unwilling tho' successful war
 On all the youth, they sicken'd; councils thinn'd,
 And armies waned, for magnet-like she drew

The rustiest iron of old fighters' hearts;
And beasts themselves would worship; camels knelt
Unbidden, and the brutes of mountain back
That carry kings in castles, bow'd black knees
Of homage, ringing with their serpent hands,
To make her smile, her golden ankle-bells.
What wonder, being jealous, that he sent
His horns of proclamation out thro' all
The hundred under-kingdoms that he sway'd
To find a wizard who might teach the King
Some charm, which being wrought upon the Queen
Might keep her all his own: to such a one
He promised more than ever king has given,
A league of mountain full of golden mines,
A province with a hundred miles of coast,
A palace and a princess, all for him:
But on all those who tried and fail'd, the King
Pronounced a dismal sentence, meaning by it
To keep the list low and pretenders back,
Or like a king, not to be trifled with—
Their heads should moulder on the city gates.
And many tried and fail'd, because the charm
Of nature in her overbore their own:
And many a wizard brow bleach'd on the walls:
And many weeks a troop of carion crows
Hung like a cloud above the gateway towers.”

And Vivien breaking in upon him, said:
“ I sit and gather honey; yet, methinks,
Your tongue has tript a little: ask yourself.
The lady never made *unwilling war*
With those fine eyes: she had her pleasure in it,
And made her good man jealous with good cause.
And lived there neither dame nor damsel then
Wroth at a lover's loss? were all as tame,
I mean, as noble, as their Queen was fair?
Not one to flirt a venom at her eyes,
Or pinch a murderous dust into her drink,
Or make her paler with a poison'd rose?
Well, those were not our days: but did they find
A wizard? Tell me, was he like to thee?”

She ceased, and made her lithe arm round his neck
Tighten, and then drew back, and let her eyes
Speak for her, glowing on him, like a bride's
On her new lord, her own, the first of men.

He answer'd laughing, "Nay, not like to me.
At last they found—his foragers for charms—
A little glassy-headed hairless man,
Who lived alone in a great wild on grass;
Read but one book, and ever reading grew
So grated down and filed away with thought,
So lean his eyes were monstrous; while the skin
Clung but to crate and basket, ribs and spine.
And since he kept his mind on one sole aim,
Nor ever touch'd fierce wine, nor tasted flesh,
Nor own'd a sensual wish, to him the wall
That sunders ghosts and shadow-casting men
Became a crystal, and he saw them thro' it,
And heard their voices talk behind the wall,
And learnt their elemental secrets, powers
And forces; often o'er the sun's bright eye
Drew the vast eyelid of an inky cloud,
And lash'd it at the base with slanting storm;
Or in the noon of mist and driving rain,
When the lake whiten'd and the pinewood roar'd,
And the cairn'd mountain was a shadow, sunn'd
The world to peace again: here was the man.
And so by force they dragg'd him to the King.
And then he taught the King to charm the Queen
In such-wise, that no man could see her more,
Nor saw she save the King, who wrought the charm
Coming and going, and she lay as dead,
And lost all use of life: but when the King
Made proffer of the league of golden mines,
The province with a hundred miles of coast,
The palace and the princess, that old man
Went back to his old wild, and lived on grass,
And vanish'd, and his book came down to me."

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily;
" You have the book; the charm is written in it:

Good: take my counsel: let me know it at once:
For keep it like a puzzle chest in chest,
With each chest lock'd and padlock'd thirty-fold,
And whelm all this beneath as vast a mound
As after furious battle turfs the slain
On some wild down above the windy deep,
I yet should strike upon a sudden means
To dig, pick, open, find and read the charm:
Then, if I tried it, who should blame me then?"

And smiling as a Master smiles at one
That is not of his school, nor any school
But that where blind and naked Ignorance
Delivers brawling judgments, unashamed,
On all things all day long; he answer'd her.

"*You* read the book, my pretty Vivien!
O ay, it is but twenty pages long,
But every page having an ample marge,
And every marge enclosing in the midst
A square of text that looks a little blot,
The text no larger than the limbs of fleas;
And every square of text an awful charm,
Writ in a language that has long gone by.
So long, that mountains have arisen since
With cities on their flanks—*you* read the book!
And every margin scribbled, crost, and cramm'd
With comment, densest condensation, hard
To mind and eye; but the long sleepless nights
Of my long life have made it easy to me.
And none can read the text, not even I;
And none can read the comment but myself;
And in the comment did I find the charm.
O, the results are simple; a mere child
Might use it to the harm of any one,
And never could undo it: ask no more:
For tho' you should not prove it upon me,
But keep that oath you swore, you might, perchance,
Assay it on some one of the Table Round,
And all because you dream they babble of you."

And Vivien, frowning in true anger, said:
 “ What dare the full-fed liars say of me?
They ride abroad redressing human wrongs!
 They sit with knife in meat and wine in horn.
They bound to holy vows of chastity!
 Were I not woman, I could tell a tale.
 But you are man, you well can understand
 The shame that cannot be explain’d for shame.
 Not one of all the drove should touch me: swine!”

Then answer’d Merlin careless of her words.
 “ You breathe but accusation vast and vague,
 Spleen-born, I think, and proofless. If you know,
 Set up the charge you know, to stand or fall!”

And Vivien answer’d frowning wrathfully.
 “ O ay, what say ye to Sir Valence, him
 Whose kinsman left him watcher o’er his wife
 And two fair babes, and went to distant lands;
 Was one year gone, and on returning found
 Not two but three: there lay the reckling, one
 But one hour old! What said the happy sire?
 A seven months’ babe had been a truer gift.
 Those twelve sweet moons confused his fatherhood.”

Then answer’d Merlin, “ Nay, I know the tale.
 Sir Valence wedded with an outland dame:
 Some cause had kept him sunder’d from his wife:
 One child they had; it lived with her: she died:
 His kinsman travelling on his own affair
 Was charged by Valence to bring home the child.
 He brought, not found it therefore: take the truth.”

“ O ay,” said Vivien, “ overtrue a tale.
 What say ye then to sweet Sir Sagamore,
 That ardent man? ‘ to pluck the flower in season; ’
 So says the song, ‘ I trow it is no treason.’
 O Master, shall we call him overquick
 To crop his own sweet rose before the hour? ”

And Merlin answer’d “ Overquick are you

To catch a lothly plume fall'n from the wing
 Of that foul bird of rapine whose whole prey
 Is man's good name: he never wrong'd his bride.
 I know the tale. An angry gust of wind
 Puff'd out his torch among the myriad-room'd
 And many corridor'd complexities
 Of Arthur's palace: then he found a door
 And darkling felt the sculptured ornament
 That wreathen round it made it seem his own;
 And wearied out made for the couch and slept,
 A stainless man beside a stainless maid;
 And either slept, nor knew of other there;
 Till the high dawn piercing the royal rose
 In Arthur's casement glimmer'd chastely down,
 Blushing upon them blushing, and at once
 He rose without a word and parted from her:
 But when the thing was blazed about the court,
 The brute world howling forced them into bonds,
 And as it chanced they are happy, being pure.”

“ O ay,” said Vivien, “ that were likely too.
 What say ye then to fair Sir Percivale
 And of the horrid foulness that he wrought,
 The saintly youth, the spotless lamb of Christ,
 Or some black wether of St. Satan's fold.
 What, in the precincts of the chapel-yard,
 Among the knightly brasses of the graves,
 And by the cold Hic Jacets of the dead! ”

And Merlin answer'd careless of her charge.
 “ A sober man is Percivale and pure;
 But once in life was fluster'd with new wine,
 Then paced for coolness in the chapel-yard;
 Where one of Satan's shepherdesses caught
 And meant to stamp him with her master's mark;
 And that he sinn'd, is not believable;
 For, look upon his face!—but if he sinn'd,
 The sin that practice burns into the blood,
 And not the one dark hour which brings remorse,
 Will brand us, after, of whose fold we be:
 Or else were he, the holy king, whose hymns

Are chanted in the minster, worse than all.
But is your spleen froth'd out, or have ye more? ”

And Vivien answer'd frowning yet in wrath;
“ O ay; what say ye to Sir Lancelot, friend?
Traitor or true? that commerce with the Queen,
I ask you, is it clamour'd by the child,
Or whisper'd in the corner? do you know it? ”

To which he answer'd sadly, “ Yea, I know it.
Sir Lancelot went ambassador, at first,
To fetch her, and she took him for the King;
So fixt her fancy on him: let him be.
But have you no one word of loyal praise
For Arthur, blameless King and stainless man? ”

She answer'd with a low and chuckling laugh;
“ Him? is he man at all, who knows and winks?
Sees what his fair bride is and does, and winks?
By which the good king means to blind himself,
And blinds himself and all the Table Round
To all the foulness that they work. Myself
Could call him (were it not for womanhood)
The pretty, popular name such manhood earns,
Could call him the main cause of all their crime;
Yea, were he not crown'd king, coward, and fool.”

Then Merlin to his own heart, loathing, said;
“ O true and tender! O my liege and king!
O selfless man and stainless gentleman,
Who would'st against thine own eye-witness fain
Have all men true and leal, all women pure;
How, in the mouths of base interpreters,
From over-fineness not intelligible
To things with every sense as false and foul
As the poach'd filth that floods the middle street,
Is thy white blamelessness accounted blame! ”

But Vivien deeming Merlin overborne
By instance, recommenced, and let her tongue
Rage like a fire among the noblest names,

Polluting, and imputing her whole self,
Defaming and defacing, till she left
Not even Lancelot brave, nor Galahad clean.

Her words had issue other than she will'd.
He dragg'd his eyebrow bushes down, and made
A snowy penthouse for his hollow eyes,
And mutter'd in himself, " tell *her* the charm!
So, if she had it, would she rail on me
To snare the next, and if she have it not,
So will she rail. What did the wanton say?
' Not mount as high; ' we scarce can sink as low:
For men at most differ as Heaven and earth,
But women, worst and best, as Heaven and Hell.
I know the Table Round, my friends of old;
All brave, and many generous, and some chaste.
I think she cloaks the wounds of loss with lies;
I do believe she tempted them and fail'd,
She is so bitter: for fine plots may fail,
Tho' harlots paint their talk as well as face
With colours of the heart that are not theirs.
I will not let her know: nine tithes of times
Face-flatterers and backbiters are the same.
And they, sweet soul, that most impute a crime
Are pronest to it, and impute themselves,
Wanting the mental range; or low desire
Not to feel lowest makes them level all;
Yea, they would pare the mountain to the plain,
To leave an equal baseness; and in this
Are harlots like the crowd, that if they find
Some stain or blemish in a name of note,
Not grieving that their greatest are so small,
Inflate themselves with some insane delight,
And judge all nature from her feet of clay,
Without the will to lift their eyes, and see
Her godlike head crown'd with spiritual fire,
And touching other worlds. I am weary of her."

He spoke in words part heard, in whispers part,
Half-suffocated in the hoary fell
And many-winter'd fleece of throat and chin.

But Vivien, gathering somewhat of his mood,
 And hearing “ harlot ” mutter’d twice or thrice,
 Leapt from her session on his lap, and stood
 Stiff as a viper frozen; loathsome sight,
 How from the rosy lips of life and love,
 Flash’d the bare-grinning skeleton of death!
 White was her cheek; sharp breaths of anger puff’d
 Her fairy nostril out; her hand half-clench’d
 Went faltering sideways downward to her belt,
 And feeling; had she found a dagger there
 (For in a wink the false love turns to hate)
 She would have stabb’d him; but she found it not:
 His eye was calm, and suddenly she took
 To bitter weeping like a beaten child,
 A long, long weeping, not consolable.
 Then her false voice made way broken with sobs.

“ O crueler than was ever told in tale,
 Or sung in song! O vainly lavish’d love!
 O cruel, there was nothing wild or strange,
 Or seeming shameful, for what shame in love,
 So love be true, and not as yours is—nothing
 Poor Vivien had not done to win his trust
 Who call’d her what he call’d her—all her crime,
 All—all—the wish to prove him wholly hers.”

She mused a little, and then clapt her hands
 Together with a wailing shriek, and said:
 “ Stabb’d through the heart’s affections to the heart!
 Seeth’d like the kid in its own mother’s milk!
 Kill’d with a word worse than a life of blows!
 I thought that he was gentle, being great:
 O God, that I had loved a smaller man!
 I should have found in him a greater heart.
 O, I, that flattering my true passion, saw
 The knights, the court, the king, dark in your light,
 Who loved to make men darker than they are,
 Because of that high pleasure which I had
 To seat you sole upon my pedestal
 Of worship—I am answer’d, and henceforth
 The course of life that seem’d so flowery to me

With you for guide and master, only you,
Becomes the sea-cliff pathway broken short,
And ending in a ruin—nothing left,
But into some low cave to crawl, and there,
If the wolf spare me, weep my life away,
Kill'd with inutterable unkindliness."

She paused, she turn'd away, she hung her head,
The snake of gold slid from her hair, the braid
Slipt and uncoil'd itself, she wept afresh,
And the dark wood grew darker toward the storm
In silence, while his anger slowly died
Within him, till he let his wisdom go
For ease of heart, and half believed her true:
Call'd her to shelter in the hollow oak,
" Come from the storm," and having no reply,
Gazed at the heaving shoulder, and the face
Hand-hidden, as for utmost grief or shame;
Then thrice essay'd, by tenderest-touching terms
To sleek her ruffled peace of mind, in vain.
At last she let herself be conquer'd by him,
And as the cageling newly flown returns,
The seeming-injured simple-hearted thing
Came to her old perch back, and settled there.
There while she sat, half-falling from his knees,
Half-nestled at his heart, and since he saw
The slow tear creep from her closed eyelid yet,
About her, more in kindness than in love,
The gentle wizard cast a shielding arm.
But she dislink'd herself at once and rose,
Her arms upon her breast across, and stood
A virtuous gentlewoman deeply wrong'd,
Upright and flush'd before him: then she said:

" There must be now no passages of love
Betwixt us twain henceforward evermore.
Since, if I be what I am grossly call'd,
What should be granted which your own gross heart
Would reckon worth the taking? I will go.
In truth, but one thing now—better have died
Thrice than have ask'd it once—could make me stay—

That proof of trust—so often ask'd in vain!
How justly, after that vile term of yours,
I find with grief! I might believe you then,
Who knows? once more. O, what was once to me
Mere matter of the fancy, now has grown
The vast necessity of heart and life.
Farewell; think kindly of me, for I fear
My fate or fault, omitting gayer youth
For one so old, must be to love you still.
But ere I leave you let me swear once more
That if I schemed against your peace in this,
May yon just heaven, that darkens o'er me, send
One flash, that, missing all things else, may make
My scheming brain a cinder, if I lie."

Scarce had she ceased, when out of heaven a bolt
(For now the storm was close above them) struck,
Furrowing a giant oak, and javelining
With darted spikes and splinters of the wood
The dark earth round. He raised his eyes and saw
The tree that shone white-listed thro' the gloom.
But Vivien, fearing heaven had heard her oath,
And dazzled by the livid-flickering fork,
And deafen'd with the stammering cracks and claps
That follow'd, flying back and crying out,
"O Merlin, tho' you do not love me, save,
Yet save me!" clung to him and hugg'd him close;
And call'd him dear protector in her fright,
Nor yet forgot her practice in her fright,
But wrought upon his mood and hugg'd him close.
The pale blood of the wizard at her touch
Took gayer colours, like an opal warm'd.
She blamed herself for telling hearsay tales:
She shook from fear, and for her fault she wept
Of petulance; she call'd him lord and liege,
Her seer, her bard, her silver star of eve,
Her God, her Merlin, the one passionate love
Of her whole life; and ever overhead
Bellow'd the tempest, and the rotten branch
Snapt in the rushing of the river-rain
Above them; and in change of glare and gloom

Her eyes and neck glittering went and came;
Till now the storm, its burst of passion spent,
Moaning and calling out of other lands,
Had left the ravaged woodland yet once more
To peace; and what should not have been had been,
For Merlin, overtak'd and overworn,
Had yielded, told her all the charm, and slept.

Then, in one moment, she put forth the charm
Of woven paces and of waving hands,
And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,
And lost to life and use and name and fame.

Then crying "I have made his glory mine,"
And shrieking out "O fool!" the harlot leapt
Adown the forest, and the thicket closed
Behind her, and the forest echo'd "fool."

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

ELAINE the fair, Elaine the loveable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber up a tower to the east
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot;
Which first she placed where morning's earliest ray
Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam;
Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'd for it
A case of silk, and braided thereupon
All the devices blazon'd on the shield
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,
A border fantasy of branch and flower,
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.
Nor rested thus content, but day by day
Leaving her household and good father, climb'd
That eastern tower, and entering barr'd her door,
Stript off the case, and read the naked shield,
Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his arms,
Now made a pretty history to herself
Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,
And every scratch a lance had made upon it,
Conjecturing when and where: this cut is fresh;
That ten years back; this dealt him at Caerlyle;
That at Caerleon; this at Camelot:
And ah God's mercy what a stroke was there!
And here a thrust that might have kill'd, but God
Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his enemy down,
And saved him: so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good shield
Of Lancelot, she that knew not ev'n his name?
He left it with her, when he rode to tilt
For the great diamond in the diamond jousts,
Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that name
Had named them, since a diamond was the prize.

For Arthur when none knew from whence he came,
Long ere the people chose him for their king,
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonnese,
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black tarn.
A horror lived about the tarn, and clave
Like its own mists to all the mountain side:
For here two brothers, one a king, had met
And fought together; but their names were lost.
And each had slain his brother at a blow,
And down they fell and made the glen abhor'd:
And there they lay till all their bones were bleach'd,
And lichen'd into colour with the crags:
And one of these, the king, had on a crown
Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside.
And Arthur came, and labouring up the pass
All in a misty moonshine, unawares
Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and the skull
Brake from the nape, and from the skull the crown
Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn:
And down the shingly scaur he plunged, and caught,
And set it on his head, and in his heart
Heard murmurs "lo, thou likewise shalt be king."

Thereafter, when a king, he had the gems
Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them to his knights,
Saying, "these jewels, whereupon I chanced
Divinely, are the kingdom's not the king's—
For public use: henceforward let there be,
Once every year, a joust for one of these:
For so by nine years' proof we needs must learn
Which is our mightiest, and ourselves shall grow
In use of arms and manhood, till we drive
The Heathen, who, some say, shall rule the land
Hereafter, which God hinder." Thus he spoke:
And eight years past, eight jousts had been, and still
Had Lancelot won the diamond of the year,
With purpose to present them to the Queen,
When all were won; but meaning all at once
To snare her royal fancy with a boon
Worth half her realm, had never spoken word.

Now for the central diamond and the last
 And largest, Arthur, holding then his court
 Hard on the river nigh the place which now
 Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust
 At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
 Spake (for she had been sick) to Guinevere
 "Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot move
 To these fair jousts?" "Yea, lord," she said, "you
 know it."

"Then will you miss," he answer'd, "the great deeds
 Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,
 A sight you love to look on." And the Queen
 Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly
 On Lancelot, where he stood beside the King.
 He thinking that he read her meaning there,
 "Stay with me, I am sick; my love is more
 Than many diamonds," yielded, and a heart,
 Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen
 (However much he yearn'd to make complete
 The tale of diamonds for his destined boon)
 Urged him to speak against the truth, and say,
 "Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly whole,
 And lets me from the saddle;" and the King
 Glanced first at him, then her, and went his way.
 No sooner gone than suddenly she began.

"To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot, much to blame.
 Why go you not to these fair jousts? the knights
 Are half of them our enemies, and the crowd
 Will murmur, lo the shameless ones, who take
 Their pastime now the trustful king is gone!"
 Then Lancelot vext at having lied in vain:
 "Are you so wise? you were not once so wise,
 My Queen, that summer, when you loved me first.
 Then of the crowd you took no more account
 Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,
 When its own voice clings to each blade of grass,
 And every voice is nothing. As to knights,
 Them surely can I silence with all ease.
 But now my loyal worship is allow'd
 Of all men: many a bard, without offence,

Has link'd our names together in his lay,
Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guinevere,
The pearl of beauty: and our knights at feast
Have pledged us in this union, while the king
Would listen smiling. How then? is there more?
Has Arthur spoken aught? or would yourself,
Now weary of my service and devoir,
Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?"

She broke into a little scornful laugh.
"Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless King,
That passionate perfection, my good lord—
But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?
He never spake word of reproach to me,
He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,
He cares not for me: only here to-day
There gleam'd a vague suspicion in his eyes:
Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with him—else
Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
And swearing men to vows impossible,
To make them like himself: but, friend, to me
He is all fault who hath no fault at all:
For who loves me must have a touch of earth;
The low sun makes the colour: I am yours,
Not Arthur's, as you know, save by the bond.
And therefore hear my words: go to the jousts:
The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our dream
When sweetest; and the vermin voices here
May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but they sting."

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights.
"And with what face, after my pretext made,
Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I
Before a king who honours his own word,
As if it were his God's?"

"Yea," said the Queen,

"A moral child without the craft to rule,
Else had he not lost me: but listen to me,
If I must find you wit: we hear it said
That men go down before your spear at a touch
But knowing you are Lancelot; your great name,

This conquers: hide it therefore; go unknown:
 Win! by this kiss you will: and our true king
 Will then allow your pretext, O my knight,
 As all for glory; for to speak him true,
 You know right well, how meek soe'er he seem,
 No keener hunter after glory breathes.
 He loves it in his knights more than himself:
 They prove to him his work: win and return."

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,
 Wroth at himself: not willing to be known,
 He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare,
 Chose the green path that show'd the rarer foot,
 And there among the solitary downs,
 Full often lost in fancy, lost his way;
 Till as he traced a faintly-shadow'd track,
 That all in loops and links among the dales
 Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw
 Fired from the west, far on a hill, the towers.
 Thither he made and wound the gateway horn.
 Then came an old, dumb, myriad-wrinkled man,
 Who let him into lodging and disarm'd.
 And Lancelot marvell'd at the wordless man;
 And issuing found the Lord of Astolat
 With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine,
 Moving to meet him in the castle court;
 And close behind them stept the lily maid
 Elaine, his daughter: mother of the house
 There was not: some light jest among them rose
 With laughter dying down as the great knight
 Approach'd them: then the Lord of Astolat:
 " Whence comest thou, my guest, and by what name
 Livest between the lips? for by thy state
 And presence I might guess thee chief of those,
 After the king, who eat in Arthur's halls.
 Him have I seen: the rest, his Table Round,
 Known as they are, to me they are unknown."

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights.
 " Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and known,
 What I by mere mischance have brought, my shield.

But since I go to joust as one unknown
At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not,
Hereafter you shall know me—and the shield—
I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
Blank, or at least with some device not mine.”

Then said the Lord of Astolat, “Here is Torre’s:
Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre.
And so, God wot, his shield is blank enough.
His you can have.” Then added plain Sir Torre,
“Yea since I cannot use it, you may have it.”
Here laugh’d the father saying, “Fie, Sir Churl,
Is that an answer for a noble knight?
Allow him: but Lavaine, my younger here,
He is so full of lustihood, he will ride
Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an hour
And set it in this damsel’s golden hair,
To make her thrice as wilful as before.”

“Nay, father, nay good father, shame me not
Before this noble knight,” said young Lavaine,
“For nothing. Surely I but play’d on Torre:
He seem’d so sullen, vext he could not go:
A jest, no more: for, knight, the maiden dreamt
That some one put this diamond in her hand,
And that it was too slippery to be held,
And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,
The castle-well, belike; and then I said
That *if* I went and *if* I fought and won it
(But all was jest and joke among ourselves)
Then must she keep it safelier. All was jest.
But, father, give me leave, an if he will,
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight:
Win shall I not, but do my best to win:
Young as I am, yet would I do my best.”

“So you will grace me,” answer’d Lancelot,
Smiling a moment, “with your fellowship
O’er these waste downs whereon I lost myself,
Then were I glad of you as guide and friend;
And you shall win this diamond—as I hear,

It is a fair large diamond,—if you may,
 And yield it to this maiden, if you will.”
 “A fair large diamond,” added plain Sir Torre,
 “Such be for Queens and not for simple maids.”
 Then she, who held her eyes upon the ground,
 Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
 Flush’d slightly at the slight disparagement
 Before the stranger knight, who, looking at her,
 Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return’d:
 “If what is fair be but for what is fair,
 And only Queens are to be counted so,
 Rash were my judgment then, who deem this maid
 Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,
 Not violating the bond of like to like.”

He spoke and ceased: the lily maid Elaine,
 Won by the mellow voice before she look’d,
 Lifted her eyes, and read his lineaments.
 The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,
 In battle with the love he bare his lord,
 Had marr’d his face, and mark’d it ere his time.
 Another sinning on such heights with one,
 The flower of all the west and all the world,
 Had been the sleeker for it: but in him
 His mood was often like a fiend, and rose
 And drove him into wastes and solitudes
 For agony, who was yet a living soul.
 Marr’d as he was, he seem’d the goodliest man
 That ever among ladies ate in Hall,
 And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.
 However marr’d, of more than twice her years,
 Seam’d with an ancient swordcut on the cheek,
 And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up her eyes
 And loved him, with that love which was her doom.

Then the great knight, the darling of the court,
 Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall
 Stept with all grace, and not with half disdain
 Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,
 But kindly man moving among his kind:
 Whom they with meats and vintage of their best

And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd.
And much they ask'd of court and Table Round,
And ever well and readily answer'd he:
But Lancelot, when they glanced at Guinevere,
Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,
Heard from the Baron that, ten years before,
The heathen caught and reft him of his tongue.
" He learnt and warn'd me of their fierce design
Against my house, and him they caught and maim'd;
But I, my sons, and little daughter fled
From bonds or death, and dwelt among the woods
By the great river in a boatman's hut.
Dull days were those, till our good Arthur broke
The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill."

" O there, great Lord, doubtless," Lavaine said, rapt
By all the sweet and sudden passion of youth
Toward greatness in its elder, " you have fought.
O tell us; for we live apart, you know
Of Arthur's glorious wars." And Lancelot spoke
And answer'd him at full, as having been
With Arthur in the fight which all day long
Rang by the white mouth of the violent Glem;
And in the four wild battles by the shore
Of Duglas; that on Bassa; then the war
That thunder'd in and out the gloomy skirts
Of Celidon the forest; and again
By castle Gurnion where the glorious King
Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,
Carved of one emerald, center'd in a sun
Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he breathed;
And at Caerleon had he help'd his lord,
When the strong neighings of the wild white Horse
Set every gilded parapet shuddering;
And up in Agned Cathregonion too,
And down the waste sand-shores of Trath Treroit,
Where many a heathen fell; " and on the mount
Of Badon I myself beheld the King
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,
And all his legions crying Christ and him,
And break them; and I saw him, after, stand

High on a heap of slain, from spur to plume
 Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,
 And seeing me, with a great voice he cried
 ‘They are broken, they are broken,’ for the King,
 However mild he seems at home, nor cares
 For triumph in our mimic wars, the jousts—
 For if his own knight cast him down, he laughs
 Saying, his knights are better men than he—
 Yet in this heathen war the fire of God
 Fills him: I never saw his like: there lives
 No greater leader.”

While he utter'd this,
 Low to her own heart said the lily maid
 “Save your great self, fair lord;” and when he fell
 From talk of war to traits of pleasantry—
 Being mirthful he but in a stately kind—
 She still took note that when the living smile
 Died from his lips, across him came a cloud
 Of melancholy severe, from which again,
 Whenever in her hovering to and fro
 The lily maid had striven to make him cheer
 There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness
 Of manners and of nature: and she thought
 That all was nature, all, perchance, for her.
 And all night long his face before her lived,
 As when a painter, poring on a face,
 Divinely thro’ all hindrance finds the man
 Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
 The shape and colour of a mind and life,
 Lives for his children, ever at its best
 And fullest; so the face before her lived,
 Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full
 Of noble things, and held her from her sleep.
 Till rathe she rose, half-cheated in the thought
 She needs must bid farewell to sweet Lavaine.
 First as in fear, step after step, she stole
 Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating:
 Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the court,
 “This shield, my friend, where is it?” and Lavaine
 Past inward, as she came from out the tower.
 There to his proud horse Lancelot turn’d, and smooth’d

The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.
Half-envious of the flattering hand, she drew
Nearer and stood. He look'd, and more amazed
Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
The maiden standing in the dewy light.
He had not dream'd she was so beautiful.
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood
Rapt on his face as if it were a God's.
Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire,
That he should wear her favour at the tilt.
She braved a riotous heart in asking for it.
" Fair lord, whose name I know not—noble it is,
I well believe, the noblest—will you wear
My favour at this tourney? " " Nay," said he,
" Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
Favour of any lady in the lists.
Such is my wont, as those, who know me, know."
" Yea, so," she answer'd; " then in wearing mine
Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord,
That those who know should know you." And he turn'd
Her counsel up and down within his mind,
And found it true, and answer'd, " true, my child.
Well, I will wear it: fetch it out to me:
What is it? " and she told him " a red sleeve
Broider'd with pearls," and brought it: then he bound
Her token on his helmet, with a smile
Saying, " I never yet have done so much
For any maiden living," and the blood
Sprang to her face and fill'd her with delight;
But left her all the paler, when Lavaine
Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd shield,
His brother's; which he gave to Lancelot,
Who parted with his own to fair Elaine;
" Do me this grace, my child, to have my shield
In keeping till I come." " A grace to me,"
She answer'd, " twice to-day. I am your Squire."
Whereat Lavaine said, laughing, " Lily maid,
For fear our people call you lily maid
In earnest, let me bring your colour back;
Once, twice, and thrice: now get you hence to bed: "

So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own hand,
 And thus they moved away; she stay'd a minute,
 Then made a sudden step to the gate, and there—
 Her bright hair blown about the serious face
 Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss—
 Paused in the gateway, standing by the shield
 In silence, while she watch'd their arms far-off
 Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.

Then to her tower she climb'd, and took the shield,
 There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.

Meanwhile the new companions past away
 Far o'er the long backs of the bushless downs,
 To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived a knight
 Not far from Camelot, now for forty years
 A hermit, who had pray'd, labour'd and pray'd
 And ever labouring had scoop'd himself
 In the white rock a chapel and a hall
 On massive columns, like a shorecliff cave,
 And cells and chambers: all were fair and dry;
 The green light from the meadows underneath
 Struck up and lived along the milky roofs;
 And in the meadows tremulous aspen-trees
 And poplars made a noise of falling showers.
 And thither wending there that night they bode.

But when the next day broke from underground,
 And shot red fire and shadows thro' the cave,
 They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and rode away:
 Then Lancelot saying, "Hear, but hold my name
 Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the Lake,"
 Abash'd Lavaine, whose instant reverence,
 Dearer to true young hearts than their own praise,
 But left him leave to stammer, "Is it indeed?"
 And after muttering "The great Lancelot"
 At last he got his breath and answer'd, "One,
 One have I seen—that other, our liege lord,
 The dread Pendragon, Britain's king of kings,
 Of whom the people talk mysteriously,
 He will be there—then were I stricken blind
 That minute, I might say that I had seen."

So spake Lavaine, and when they reach'd the lists
By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes
Run thro' the peopled gallery which half round
Lay like a rainbow fall'n upon the grass,
Until they found the clear-faced King, who sat
Robed in red samite, easily to be known,
Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,
And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold,
And from the carven-work behind him crept
Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make
Arms for his chair, while all the rest of them
Thro' knots and loops and folds innumerable
Fled ever thro' the woodwork, till they found
The new design wherein they lost themselves,
Yet with all ease, so tender was the work:
And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,
Blazed the last diamond of the nameless king.
Then Lancelot answer'd young Lavaine and said,
" Me you call great: mine is the firmer seat,
The truer lance: but there is many a youth
Now crescent, who will come to all I am
And overcome it; and in me there dwells
No greatness, save it be some far-off touch
Of greatness to know well I am not great:
There is the man." And Lavaine gaped upon him
As on a thing miraculous, and anon
The trumpets blew; and then did either side,
They that assail'd, and they that held the lists,
Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly move,
Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
Shock, that a man far-off might well perceive,
If any man that day were left afield,
The hard earth shake, and a low thunder of arms.
And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw
Which were the weaker; then he hurl'd into it
Against the stronger: little need to speak
Of Lancelot in his glory: King, duke, earl,
Count, baron—whom he smote, he overthrew.

But in the field were Lancelot's kith and kin,
Ranged with the Table Round that held the lists,

Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger knight
Should do and almost overdo the deeds
Of Lancelot; and one said to the other, " Lo!
What is he? I do not mean the force alone,
The grace and versatility of the man—
Is it not Lancelot? " " When has Lancelot worn
Favour of any lady in the lists?
Not such his wont, as we, that know him, know."
" How then? who then? " a fury seized on them,
A fiery family passion for the name
Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.
They couch'd their spears and prick'd their steeds and thus,
Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind they made
In moving, all together down upon him
Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North-sea,
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark,
And him that helms it, so they overbore
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear
Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a spear
Prick'd sharply his own cuirass, and the head
Pierced thro' his side, and there snapt, and remain'd.

Then Sir Lavaine did well and worshipfully;
He bore a knight of old repute to the earth,
And brought his horse to Lancelot where he lay.
He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
But thought to do while he might yet endure,
And being lustily holpen by the rest,
His party,—tho' it seemed half-miracle
To those he fought with—drave his kith and kin,
And all the Table Round that held the lists,
Back to the barrier; then the heralds blew
Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the sleeve
Of scarlet, and the pearls; and all the knights,
His party, cried " Advance, and take thy prize
The diamond; " but he answer'd, " diamond me
No diamonds! for God's love, a little air!
Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death!
Hence will I, and I charge you, follow me not."

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from the field
With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.
There from his charger down he slid, and sat,
Gasping to Sir Lavaine, " draw the lance-head: "
" Ah my sweet lord Sir Lancelot," said Lavaine,
" I dread me, if I draw it, you will die."
But he, " I die already with it: draw—
Draw"—and Lavaine drew, and that other gave
A marvellous great shriek and ghastly groan,
And half his blood burst forth, and down he sank
For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd away.
Then came the hermit out and bare him in,
There stanch'd his wound; and there, in daily doubt
Whether to live or die, for many a week
Hid from the wide world's rumour by the grove
Of poplars with their noise of falling showers,
And ever-tremulous aspen-trees, he lay.

But on that day when Lancelot fled the lists,
His party, knights of utmost North and West,
Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate isles,
Came round their great Pendragon, saying to him
" Lo, Sire, our knight thro' whom we won the day
Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize
Untaken, crying that his prize is death."
" Heaven hinder," said the King, " that such an one,
So great a knight as we have seen to-day—
He seem'd to me another Lancelot—
Yea, twenty times I thought him Lancelot—
He must not pass uncared for. Gawain, rise,
My nephew, and ride forth and find the knight.
Wounded and wearied needs must he be near.
I charge you that you get at once to horse.
And, knights and kings, there breathes not one of you
Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given:
His prowess was too wondrous. We will do him
No customary honour: since the knight
Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,
Ourselves will send it after. Wherefore take
This diamond, and deliver it, and return,

And bring us what he is and how he fares,
And cease not from your quest, until you find."

So saying, from the carven flower above,
To which it made a restless heart, he took,
And gave, the diamond: then from where he sat
At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose,
With smiling face and frowning heart, a Prince
In the mid might and flourish of his May,
Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair and strong,
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint
And Lamorack, a good knight, but therewithal
Sir Modred's brother, of a crafty house,
Nor often loyal to his word, and now
Wroth that the king's command to sally forth
In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave
The banquet, and concourse of knights and kings.

So all in wrath he got to horse and went;
While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,
Past, thinking "Is it Lancelot who has come
Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain
Of glory, and has added wound to wound,
And ridd'n away to die?" So fear'd the King,
And, after two days' tarriance there, return'd.
Then when he saw the Queen, embracing ask'd,
"Love, are you yet so sick?" "Nay, lord," she said.
"And where is Lancelot?" Then the Queen amazed,
"Was he not with you? won he not your prize?"
"Nay, but one like him." "Why that like was he."
And when the King demanded how she knew,
Said, "Lord, no sooner had you parted from us,
Than Lancelot told me of a common talk
That men went down before his spear at a touch,
But knowing he was Lancelot; his great name
Conquer'd; and therefore would he hide his name
From all men, ev'n the king, and to this end
Had made the pretext of a hindering wound,
That he might joust unknown of all, and learn
If his old prowess were in aught decay'd:
And added, 'Our true Arthur, when he learns,

Will well allow my pretext, as for gain
Of purer glory.' "

Then replied the King:

" Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,
In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,
To have trusted me as he has trusted you.
Surely his King and most familiar friend
Might well have kept his secret. True, indeed,
Albeit I know my knights fantastical,
So fine a fear in our large Lancelot
Must needs have moved my laughter: now remains
But little cause for laughter: his own kin—
Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him, these!
His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon him;
So that he went sore wounded from the field:
Yet good news too: for goodly hopes are mine
That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.
He wore, against his wont, upon his helm
A sleeve of scarlet, brodered with great pearls,
Some gentle maiden's gift."

" Yea, lord," she said,
" Your hopes are mine," and saying that she choked,
And sharply turn'd about to hide her face,
Moved to her chamber, and there flung herself
Down on the great King's couch, and writhed upon it,
And clench'd her fingers till they bit the palm,
And shriek'd out " traitor " to the unhearing wall,
Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose again,
And moved about her palace, proud and pale.

Gawain the while thro' all the region round
Rode with his diamond, wearied of the quest,
Touch'd at all points, except the poplar grove,
And came at last, tho' late, to Astolat:
Whom glittering in enamell'd arms the maid
Glanced at, and cried, " What news from Camelot, lord?
What of the knight with the red sleeve? " " He won."
" I knew it," she said. " But parted from the jousts
Hurt in the side," whereat she caught her breath;
Thro' her own side she felt the sharp lance go;

Thereon she smote her hand: well-nigh she swoon'd:
And, while he gazed wonderingly at her, came
The lord of Astolat out, to whom the Prince
Reported who he was, and on what quest
Sent, that he bore the prize and could not find
The victor, but had ridden wildly round
To seek him, and was wearied of the search.
To whom the lord of Astolat, "Bide with us,
And ride no longer wildly, noble Prince!
Here was the knight, and here he left a shield;
This will he send or come for: furthermore
Our son is with him, we shall hear anon,
Needs must we hear." To this the courteous Prince
Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it,
And stay'd; and cast his eyes on fair Elaine:
Where could be found face daintier? then her shape
From forehead down to foot perfect—again
From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd:
"Well—if I bide, lo! this wild flower for me!"
And oft they met among the garden yews,
And there he set himself to play upon her
With sallying wit, free flashes from a height
Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden eloquence
And amorous adulation, till the maid
Rebell'd against it, saying to him, "Prince,
O loyal nephew of our noble King,
Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
Whence you might learn his name? Why slight your
King,
And lose the quest he sent you on, and prove
No surer than our falcon yesterday,
Who lost the hern we slipt him at, and went
To all the winds?" "Nay, by mine head," said he,
"I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,
O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes:
But an you will it let me see the shield."
And when the shield was brought, and Gawain saw
Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with gold,
Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh, and mock'd;

"Right was the King! our Lancelot! that true man!"

"And right was I," she answer'd merrily, "I,
Who dream'd my knight the greatest knight of all."

"And if *I* dream'd," said Gawain, "that you love
This greatest knight, your pardon! lo, you know it!
Speak therefore: shall I waste myself in vain?"

Full simple was her answer "What know I?

My brethren have been all my fellowship,
And I, when often they have talk'd of love,
Wish'd it had been my mother, for they talk'd,
Meseem'd, of what they knew not; so myself—
I know not if I know what true love is,
But if I know, then, if I love not him,
Methinks there is none other I can love."

"Yea, by God's death," said he, "you love him well.
But would not, knew you what all others know,
And whom he loves." "So be it," cried Elaine,
And lifted her fair face and moved away:

But he pursued her calling "Stay a little!

One golden minute's grace: he wore your sleeve:
Would he break faith with one I may not name?
Must our true man change like a leaf at last?

May it be so? why then, far be it from me
To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves!
And, damsel, for I deem you know full well
Where your great knight is hidden, let me leave
My quest with you; the diamond also: here!
For if you love, it will be sweet to give it;
And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
From your own hand; and whether he love or not,
A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well
A thousand times!—a thousand times farewell!

Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two
May meet at court hereafter: there, I think,
So you will learn the courtesies of the court,
We two shall know each other."

Then he gave,

And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he gave,
The diamond, and all wearied of the quest
Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he went
A true-love ballad, lightly rode away.

Thence to the court he past; there told the King
What the King knew, "Sir Lancelot is the knight."
And added "Sire, my liege, so much I learnt;
But fail'd to find him tho' I rode all round
The region: but I lighted on the maid,
Whose sleeve he wore; she loves him; and to her,
Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,
I gave the diamond: she will render it;
For by mine head she knows his hiding-place."

The seldom-frowning King frown'd, and replied,
"Too courteous truly! you shall go no more
On quest of mine, seeing that you forget
Obedience is the courtesy due to kings."

He spake and parted. Wroth but all in awe,
For twenty strokes of the blood, without a word,
Linger'd that other, staring after him;
Then shook his hair, strode off, and buzz'd abroad
About the maid of Astolat, and her love.
All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues were loosed:
"The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot,
Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat."
Some read the King's face, some the Queen's, and all
Had marvel what the maid might be, but most
Predoom'd her as unworthy. One old dame
Came suddenly on the Queen with the sharp news.
She, that had heard the noise of it before,
But sorrowing Lancelot should have stoop'd so low,
Marr'd her friend's point with pale tranquillity.
So ran the tale like fire about the court,
Fire in dry stubble a nine days' wonder flared:
Till ev'n the knights at banquet twice or thrice
Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,
And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
Smiled at each other, while the Queen who sat
With lips severely placid felt the knot
Climb in her throat, and with her feet unseen
Crush'd the wild passion out against the floor
Beneath the banquet, where the meats became
As wormwood, and she hated all who pledged.

But far away the maid in Astolat,
Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face and said,
“ Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
Is yours who let me have my will, and now,
Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits? ”
“ Nay,” said he, “ surely.” “ Wherefore let me hence,”
She answer’d, “ and find out our dear Lavaine.”
“ You will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine:
Bide,” answer’d he: “ we needs must hear anon
Of him, and of that other.” “ Ay,” she said,
“ And of that other, for I needs must hence
And find that other, wheresoe’er he be,
And with mine own hand give his diamond to him,
Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
As yon proud Prince who left the quest to me.
Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Death-pale, for lack of gentle maiden’s aid.
The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,
My father, to be sweet and serviceable
To noble knights in sickness, as you know,
When these have worn their tokens: let me hence
I pray you.” Then her father nodding said,
“ Ay, ay, the diamond: wit you well, my child.
Right fain were I to learn this knight were whole,
Being our greatest: yea, and you must give it—
And sure I think this fruit is hung too high
For any mouth to gape for save a Queen’s—
Nay, I mean nothing: so then, get you gone,
Being so very wilful you must go.”

Lightly, her suit allow’d, she slipt away,
And while she made her ready for her ride,
Her father’s latest word humm’d in her ear,
“ Being so very wilful you must go,”
And changed itself and echoed in her heart,
“ Being so very wilful you must die.”
But she was happy enough and shook it off,

As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us;
And in her heart she answer'd it and said,
" What matter, so I help him back to life? "
Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide
Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs
To Camelot, and before the city-gates
Came on her brother with a happy face
Making a roan horse caper and curvet
For pleasure all about a field of flowers:
Whom when she saw, " Lavaine," she cried, " Lavaine,
How fares my lord Sir Lancelot? " He amazed,
" Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir Lancelot!
How know you my lord's name is Lancelot? "
But when the maid had told him all her tale,
Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his moods
Left them, and under the strange-statued gate,
Where Arthur's wars were render'd mystically,
Past up the still rich city to his kin,
His own far blood, which dwelt at Camelot;
And her Lavaine across the poplar grove
Led to the caves: there first she saw the casque
Of Lancelot on the wall: her scarlet sleeve,
Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls away,
Stream'd from it still; and in her heart she laugh'd,
Because he had not loosed it from his helm,
But meant once more perchance to tourney in it.
And when they gain'd the cell in which he slept,
His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands
Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream
Of dragging down his enemy made them move.
Then she that saw him lying unsleek, unshorn,
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Uttered a little tender dolorous cry.
The sound not wonted in a place so still
Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd his eyes
Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying,
" Your prize the diamond sent you by the King: "
His eyes glisten'd: she fancied " is it for me? "
And when the maid had told him all the tale
Of King and Prince, the diamond sent, the quest
Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt

Full lowly by the corners of his bed,
And laid the diamond in his open hand.
Her face was near, and as we kiss the child
That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her face.
At once she slipt like water to the floor.
"Alas," he said, "your ride has wearied you.
Rest must you have." "No rest for me," she said;
"Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest."
What might she mean by that? his large black eyes,
Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon her,
Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself
In the heart's colours on her simple face;
And Lancelot look'd and was perplext in mind,
And being weak in body said no more;
But did not love the colour; woman's love,
Save one, he not regarded, and so turn'd
Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the fields,
And past beneath the wildly-sculptured gates
Far up the dim rich city to her kin;
There bode the night: but woke with dawn, and past
Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,
Thence to the cave: so day by day she past
In either twilight ghost-like to and fro
Gliding, and every day she tended him,
And likewise many a night: and Lancelot
Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little hurt
Whereof he should be quickly whole, at times
Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem
Uncourteous, even he: but the meek maid
Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him
Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
Milder than any mother to a sick child,
And never woman yet, since man's first fall,
Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love
Upbore her; till the hermit, skill'd in all
The simples and the science of that time,
Told him that her fine care had saved his life.
And the sick man forgot her simple blush,
Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine,

Would listen for her coming and regret
Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
And loved her with all love except the love
Of man and woman when they love their best
Closest and sweetest, and had died the death
In any knightly fashion for her sake.
And peradventure had he seen her first
She might have made this and that other world
Another world for the sick man; but now
The shackles of an old love straiten'd him,
His honour, rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made
Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.
These, as but born of sickness, could not live:
For when the blood ran lustier in him again,
Full often the sweet image of one face,
Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,
Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.
Then if the maiden, while that ghostly grace
Beam'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd not,
Or short and coldly, and she knew right well
What the rough sickness meant, but what this meant
She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd her sight,
And drove her ere her time across the fields
Far into the rich city, where alone
She murmur'd "vain, in vain: it cannot be.
He will not love me: how then? must I die?"
Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
That has but one plain passage of few notes,
Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
For all an April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid
Went half the night repeating, "must I die?"
And now to right she turn'd, and now to left,
And found no ease in turning or in rest;
And "him or death" she mutter'd, "death or him,"
Again and like a burthen, "him or death."

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole,

To Astolat returning rode the three.
There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self
In that wherein she deem'd she look'd her best,
She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought
“ If I be loved, these are my festal robes,
If not, the victim's flowers before he fall.”
And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid
That she should ask some goodly gift of him
For her own self or hers; “ and do not shun
To speak the wish most near to your true heart;
Such service have you done me, that I make
My will of yours, and Prince and Lord am I
In mine own land, and what I will I can.”
Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
But like a ghost without the power to speak.
And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish,
And bode among them yet a little space
Till he should learn it; and one morn it chanced
He found her in among the garden yews,
And said, “ Delay no longer, speak your wish,
Seeing I must go to-day: ” then out she brake;
“ Going? and we shall never see you more.
And I must die for want of one bold word.”
“ Speak: that I live to hear,” he said, “ is yours.”
Then suddenly and passionately she spoke:
“ I have gone mad. I love you: let me die.”
“ Ah sister,” answer'd Lancelot, “ what is this? ”
And innocently extending her white arms,
“ Your love,” she said, “ your love—to be your wife.”
And Lancelot answer'd, “ Had I chos'n to wed,
I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine:
But now there never will be wife of mine.”
“ No, no,” she cried, “ I care not to be wife,
But to be with you still, to see your face,
To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world.”
And Lancelot answer'd, “ Nay, the world, the world,
All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
To blare its own interpretation—nay,
Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,
And your good father's kindness.” And she said

" Not to be with you, not to see your face—
Alas for me then, my good days are done."

" Nay, noble maid," he answer'd, " ten times nay!
This is not love: but love's first flash in youth,
Most common: yea I know it of mine own self:
And you yourself will smile at your own self
Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life
To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age:
And then will I, for true you are and sweet
Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,
More specially should your good knight be poor,
Endow you with broad land and territory
Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,
So that would make you happy: furthermore,
Ev'n to the death, as tho' you were my blood,
In all your quarrels will I be your knight.
This will I do, dear damsels, for your sake,
And more than this I cannot."

While he spoke

She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly-pale
Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied:
" Of all this will I nothing;" and so fell,
And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom thro' those black walls of yew
Their talk had pierced, her father. " Ay, a flash,
I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead.
Too courteous are you, fair Lord Lancelot.
I pray you, use some rough courtesy
To blunt or break her passion."

Lancelot said,

" That were against me: what I can I will;"
And there that day remain'd, and toward even
Sent for his shield: full meekly rose the maid,
Stript off the case, and gave the naked shield;
Then, when she heard his horse upon the stones,
Unclasping flung the casement back, and look'd
Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone.
And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound;
And she by tact of love was well aware
That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him.

And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his hand,
Nor bad farewell, but sadly rode away.
This was the one courtesy that he used.

So in her tower alone the maiden sat:
His very shield was gone; only the case,
Her own poor work, her empty labour, left.
But still she heard him, still his picture form'd
And grew between her and the pictured wall.
Then came her father, saying in low tones,
"Have comfort," whom she greeted quietly.
Then came her brethren saying, "Peace to thee
Sweet sister," whom she answer'd with all calm.
But when they left her to herself again,
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant field
Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd; the owls
Wailing had power upon her, and she mixt
Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms
Of evening, and the moanings of the wind.

And in those days she made a little song,
And call'd her song "The Song of Love and Death,"
And sang it: sweetly could she make and sing.

"Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in vain;
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain:
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I."

"Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be:
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die."

"Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away,
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay,
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I."

"I fain would follow love, if that could be;
I needs must follow death, who calls for me;
Call and I follow, I follow! let me die."

High with the last line scaled her voice, and this,

Idylls of the King

All in a fiery dawning wild with wind
 That shook her tower, the brothers heard, and thought
 With shuddering, "Hark the Phantom of the house
 That ever shrieks before a death," and call'd
 The father, and all three in hurry and fear
 Ran to her, and lo! the bloodred light of dawn
 Flared on her face, she shrilling "Let me die!"

As when we dwell upon a word we know
 Repeating, till the word we know so well
 Becomes a wonder and we know not why,
 So dwelt the father on her face and thought
 "Is this Elaine?" till back the maiden fell,
 Then gave a languid hand to each, and lay,
 Speaking a still good-morrow with her eyes.
 At last she said, "Sweet brothers, yesternight
 I seem'd a curious little maid again,
 As happy as when we dwelt among the woods,
 And when you used to take me with the flood
 Up the great river in the boatman's boat.
 Only you would not pass beyond the cape
 That has the poplar on it: there you fixt
 Your limit, oft returning with the tide.
 And yet I cried because you would not pass
 Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
 Until we found the palace of the king.
 And yet you would not; but this night I dream'd
 That I was all alone upon the flood,
 And then I said, 'Now shall I have my will:'
 And there I woke, but still the wish remain'd.
 So let me hence that I may pass at last
 Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,
 Until I find the palace of the king.
 There will I enter in among them all,
 And no man there will dare to mock at me;
 But there the fine Gawain will wonder at me,
 And there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me;
 Gawain, who bad a thousand farewells to me,
 Lancelot, who coldly went nor bad me one:
 And there the King will know me and my love,
 And there the Queen herself will pity me,

And all the gentle court will welcome me,
And after my long voyage I shall rest!"

"Peace," said her father, "O my child, you seem
Light-headed, for what force is yours to go
So far, being sick? and wherefore would you look
On this proud fellow again, who scorns us all?"

Then the rough Torre began to heave and move,
And bluster into stormy sobs and say,
"I never loved him: an I meet with him,
I care not howsoever great he be,
Then will I strike at him and strike him down,
Give me good fortune, I will strike him dead,
For this discomfort he hath done the house."

To which the gentle sister made reply,
"Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be wroth,
Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault
Not to love me, than it is mine to love
Him of all men who seems to me the highest."

"Highest?" the Father answer'd, echoing "highest?"
(He meant to break the passion in her) "nay,
Daughter, I know not what you call the highest;
But this I know, for all the people know it,
He loves the Queen, and in an open shame:
And she returns his love in open shame.
If this be high, what is it to be low?"

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat;
"Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I
For anger: these are slanders: never yet
Was noble man but made ignoble talk.
He makes no friend who never made a foe.
But now it is my glory to have loved
One peerless, without stain: so let me pass,
My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best
And greatest, tho' my love had no return:
Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,

Thanks, but you work against your own desire;
For if I could believe the things you say
I should but die the sooner; wherefore cease,
Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man
Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and die."

So when the ghostly man had come and gone
She with a face, bright as for sin forgiven,
Besought Lavaine to write as she devised
A letter, word for word; and when he ask'd,
" Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord?
Then will I bear it gladly;" she replied,
" For Lancelot and the Queen and all the world,
But I myself must bear it." Then he wrote
The letter she devised; which being writ
And folded, " O sweet father, tender and true,
Deny me not," she said—" you never yet
Denied my fancies—this, however strange,
My latest: lay the letter in my hand
A little ere I die, and close the hand
Upon it; I shall guard it even in death.
And when the heat is gone from out my heart,
Then take the little bed on which I died
For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's
For richness, and me also like the Queen
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.
And let there be prepared a chariot-bier
To take me to the river, and a barge
Be ready on the river, clothed in black.
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.
There surely I shall speak for mine own self,
And none of you can speak for me so well.
And therefore let our dumb old man alone
Go with me, he can steer and row, and he
Will guide me to that palace, to the doors."

She ceased: her father promised; whereupon
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.
But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh
Her father laid the letter in her hand,

And closed the hand upon it, and she died.
So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from underground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that shone
Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her,
" Sister, farewell for ever," and again,
" Farewell, sweet sister," parted all in tears.
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead
Steer'd by the dumb went upward with the flood—
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
All but her face, and that clear-featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace craved
Audience of Guinevere, to give at last
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,
Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and blow,
With deaths of others, and almost his own,
The nine-years-fought-for diamonds: for he saw
One of her house, and sent him to the Queen
Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen agreed
With such and so unmoved a majesty
She might have seem'd her statue, but that he,
Low-drooping, till he well-nigh kiss'd her feet
For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye

The shadow of a piece of pointed lace,
 In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the walls,
 And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel on the summer side,
 Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the stream,
 They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd, " Queen,
 Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,
 Take, what I had not won except for you,
 These jewels, and make me happy, making them
 An armlet for the roundest arm on earth,
 Or necklace for a neck to which the swan's
 Is tawnier than her cygnet's: these are words:
 Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin
 In speaking, yet O grant my worship of it
 Words, as we grant grief tears. Such sin in words,
 Perchance, we both can pardon: but, my Queen,
 I hear of rumours flying thro' your court.
 Our bond, as not the bond of man and wife,
 Should have in it an absulter trust
 To make up that defect: let rumours be:
 When did not rumours fly? these, as I trust
 That you trust me in your own nobleness,
 I may not well believe that you believe."

While thus he spoke, half turn'd away, the Queen
 Brake from the vast oriel-embowering vine
 Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them off,
 Till all the place whereon she stood was green;
 Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive hand
 Received at once and laid aside the gems
 There on a table near her, and replied:

" It may be, I am quicker of belief
 Than you believe me, Lancelot of the Lake.
 Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.
 This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill,
 It can be broken easier. I for you
 This many a year have done despite and wrong
 To one whom ever in my heart of hearts
 I did acknowledge nobler. What are these?

Diamonds for me! they had been thrice their worth,
Being your gift, had you not lost your own.
To loyal hearts the value of all gifts
Must vary as the giver's. Not for me!
For her! for your new fancy. Only this
Grant me, I pray you: have your joys apart.
I doubt not that however changed, you keep
So much of what is graceful: and myself
Would shun to break those bounds of courtesy
In which as Arthur's queen I move and rule:
So cannot speak my mind. An end to this!
A strange one! yet I take it with Amen.
So pray you, add my diamonds to her pearls;
Deck her with these; tell her, she shines me down:
An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's
Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck
O as much fairer—as a faith once fair
Was richer than these diamonds—hers not mine—
Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,
Or hers or mine, mine now to work my will—
She shall not have them."

Saying which she seized,

And, thro' the casement standing wide for heat,
Flung them, and down they flash'd, and smote the stream,
Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as it were,
Diamonds to meet them, and they past away.
Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half disgust
At love, life, all things, on the window ledge,
Close underneath his eyes, and right across
Where these had fallen, slowly past the barge
Whereon the lily maid of Astolat
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst away
To weep and wail in secret; and the barge,
On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.
There two stood arm'd, and kept the door; to whom,
All up the marble stair, tier over tier,
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes that ask'd
"What is it?" but that oarsman's haggard face,
As hard and still as is the face that men

Shape to their fancy's eye from broken rocks
 On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and they said,
 " He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,
 Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen, so fair!
 Yea, but how pale! what are they? flesh and blood?
 Or come to take the King to fairy land?
 For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,
 But that he passes into fairy land."

While thus they babbled of the King, the King
 Came girt with knights: then turn'd the tongueless man
 From the half-face to the full eye, and rose
 And pointed to the damsel, and the doors.
 So Arthur bad the meek Sir Percivale
 And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid;
 And reverently they bore her into hall.
 Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd at her,
 And Lancelot later came and mused at her,
 And last the Queen herself and pitied her:
 But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
 Stoopt, took, brake seal, and read it; this was all:

" Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
 I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,
 Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
 Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
 I loved you, and my love had no return,
 And therefore my true love has been my death.
 And therefore to our lady Guinevere,
 And to all other ladies, I make moan.
 Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.
 Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
 As thou art a knight peerless."

Thus he read,
 And ever in the reading, lords and dames
 Wept, looking often, from his face who read
 To hers which lay so silent, and at times,
 So touch'd were they, half-thinking that her lips,
 Who had devised the letter, moved again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all;

" My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,
Know that for this most gentle maiden's death
Right heavy am I; for good she was and true,
But loved me with a love beyond all love
In women, whomsoever I have known.
Yet to be loved makes not to love again;
Not at my years, however it hold in youth.
I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave
No cause, not willingly, for such a love:
To this I call my friends in testimony,
Her brethren, and her father, who himself
Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,
To break her passion, some courtesy
Against my nature: what I could, I did.
I left her and I bad her no farewell.
Tho', had I dreamt the damsels would have died,
I might have put my wits to some rough use,
And help'd her from herself."

Then said the Queen

(Sea was her wrath, yet working after storm),
" You might at least have done her so much grace,
Fair lord, as would have help'd her from her death."
He raised his head, their eyes met and hers fell,
He adding,

" Queen, she would not be content
Save that I wedded her, which could not be.
Then might she follow me thro' the world, she ask'd;
It could not be. I told her that her love
Was but the flash of youth, would darken down
To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
Toward one more worthy of her—then would I,
More specially were he, she wedded, poor,
Estate them with large land and territory
In mine own realm beyond the narrow seas,
To keep them in all joyance: more than this
I could not; this she would not, and she died."

He pausing, Arthur answer'd, " O my knight,
It will be to your worship, as my knight,
And mine, as head of all our Table Round,
To see that she be buried worshipfully."

So toward that shrine which then in all the realm
Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went
The marshall'd order of their Table Round,
And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,
And mass, and rolling music, like a Queen.
And when the knights had laid her comely head
Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
Then Arthur spake among them, "Let her tomb
Be costly, and her image thereupon.
And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet
Be carven, and her lily in her hand.
And let the story of her dolorous voyage
For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb
In letters gold and azure!" which was w:ought
Thereafter; but when now the lords and dames
And people, from the high door streaming, brake
Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,
Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he moved apart,
Drew near, and sigh'd in passing, "Lancelot,
Forgive me; mine was jealousy in love."
He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,
"That is love's curse; pass on, my Queen, forgiven."
But Arthur who beheld his cloudy brows
Approach'd him, and with full affection flung
One arm about his neck, and spake and said:

"Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have
Most love and most affiance, for I know
What thou hast been in battle by my side,
And many a time have watch'd thee at the tilt
Strike down the lusty and long-practised knight,
And let the younger and unskill'd go by
To win his honour and to make his name,
And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
Made to be loved;—but now I would to God,
For the wild people say wild things of thee,
Thou could'st have loved this maiden, shaped, it seems,
By God for thee alone, and from her face,
If one may judge the living by the dead,

Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man
Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons
Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake."

Then answer'd Lancelot, " Fair she was, my King,
Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be.
To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,
To doubt her pureness were to want a heart—
Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love
Could bind him, but free love will not be bound."

" Free love, so bound, were freëst," said the King.
" Let love be free; free love is for the best:
And, after heaven, on our dull side of death,
What should be best, if not so pure a love
Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee
She fail'd to bind, tho' being, as I think,
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know."

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but he went,
And at the inrunning of a little brook
Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd
The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes
And saw the barge that brought her moving down,
Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said
Low in himself, " Ah simple heart and sweet,
You loved me, damsel, surely with a love
Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for thy soul?
Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at last—
Farewell, fair lily. ' Jealousy in love?'
Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous pride?
Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,
May not your crescent fear for name and fame
Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?
Why did the King dwell on my name to me?
Mine own name shames me, seeming a reproach,
Lancelot, whom the Lady of the lake
Stole from his mother—as the story runs—
She chanted snatches of mysterious song

Heard on the winding waters, eve and morn
She kiss'd me saying, 'Thou art fair, my child,
As a king's son,' and often in her arms
She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere.
Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er it be!
For what am I? what profits me my name
Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and have it:
Pleasure to have it, none; to lose it, pain;
Now grown a part of me: but what use in it?
To make men worse by making my sin known?
Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must break
These bonds that so defame me: not without
She wills it: would I, if she will'd it? Nay,
Who knows? but if I would not, then may God,
I pray him, send a sudden Angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills."

So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain,
Not knowing he should die a holy man.

GUINEVERE

QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court, and sat
There in the holy house at Almesbury
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,
A novice: one low light betwixt them burn'd
Blurr'd by the creeping mist, for all abroad,
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.

For hither had she fled, her cause of flight
Sir Modred; he the nearest to the King,
His nephew, ever like a subtle beast
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,
Ready to spring, waiting a chance: for this,
He chill'd the popular praises of the King
With silent smiles of slow disparagement;
And tamper'd with the Lords of the White Horse,
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left; and sought
To make disruption in the Table Round
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
Serving his traitorous end; and all his aims
Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lancelot.

For thus it chanced one morn when all the court,
Green-suited, but with plumes that mock'd the may,
Had been, their wont, a-maying and return'd,
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,
Climb'd to the high top of the garden-wall
To spy some secret scandal if he might,
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her best
Enid, and lissome Vivien, of her court
The wiliest and the worst; and more than this
He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by
Spied where he couch'd, and as the gardener's hand
Picks from the colewort a green caterpillar,

So from the high wall and the flowering grove
Of grasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the heel,
And cast him as a worm upon the way;
But when he knew the Prince tho' marr'd with dust,
He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,
Made such excuses as he might, and these
Full knightly without scorn; for in those days
No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn;
But, if a man were halt or hunch'd, in him
By those whom God had made full-limb'd and tall,
Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect,
And he was answer'd softly by the King
And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot holp
To raise the Prince who rising, twice or thrice
Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled, and went:
But, ever after, the small violence done
Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,
As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long
A little bitter pool about a stone
On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told
This matter to the Queen, at first she laugh'd
Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,
Then shudder'd, as the village wife who cries,
"I shudder, some one steps across my grave;"
Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed
She half-foresaw that he, the subtle beast,
Would track her guilt until he found, and hers
Would be for evermore a name of scorn.
Henceforward rarely could she front in Hall,
Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,
Heart-hiding smile, and gray persistent eye:
Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,
To help it from the death that cannot die,
And save it even in extremes, began
To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,
Beside the placid breathings of the King,
In the dead night, grim faces came and went
Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—
Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,
Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,

That keeps the rust of murder on the walls—
Held her awake: or if she slept, she dream'd
An awful dream; for then she seem'd to stand
On some vast plain before a setting sun,
And from the sun there swiftly made at her
A ghastly something, and its shadow flew
Before it, till it touch'd her, and she turn'd—
When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,
And blackening, swallow'd all the land, and in it
Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.
And all this trouble did not pass but grew;
Till ev'n the clear face of the guileless King,
And trustful courtesies of household life,
Became her bane; and at the last she said,
“ O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,
For if thou tarry we shall meet again,
And if we meet again, some evil chance
Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze
Before the people, and our lord the King.”
And Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd,
And still they met and met. Again she said,
“ O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence.”
And then they were agreed upon a night
(When the good King should not be there) to meet
And part for ever. Passion-pale they met
And greeted: hands in hands, and eye to eye,
Low on the border of her couch they sat
Stammering and staring: it was their last hour,
A madness of farewells. And Modred brought
His creatures to the basement of the tower
For testimony; and crying with full voice,
“ Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last,” aroused
Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike
Leapt on him, and hurl'd him headlong, and he fell
Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bare him off
And all was still: then she, “ the end is come
And I am shamed for ever; ” and he said,
“ Mine be the shame; mine was the sin: but rise,
And fly to my strong castle overseas:
There will I hide thee, till my life shall end,
There hold thee with my life against the world.”

She answer'd, " Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?
 Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.
 Would God, that thou could'st hide me from myself!
 Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou
 Unwedded: yet rise now, and let us fly,
 For I will draw me into sanctuary,
 And bide my doom." So Lancelot got her horse,
 Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,
 And then they rode to the divided way,
 There kiss'd, and parted weeping: for he past,
 Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,
 Back to his land; but she to Almesbury
 Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald,
 And heard the Spirits of the waste and weald
 Moan as she fled, or thought she heard them moan:
 And in herself she moan'd, " too late, too late!"
 Till in the cold wind that foreruns the morn,
 A blot in heaven, the Raven, flying high,
 Croak'd, and she thought, " he spies a field of death;
 For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea,
 Lured by the crimes and frailties of the court,
 Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land."

And when she came to Almesbury she spake
 There to the nuns, and said, " Mine enemies
 Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,
 Receive, and yield me sanctuary, nor ask
 Her name, to whom ye yield it, till her time
 To tell you," and her beauty, grace and power,
 Wrought as a charm upon them, and they spared
 To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode
 For many a week, unknown, among the nuns;
 Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name, nor sought,
 Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for shrift,
 But communed only with the little maid,
 Who pleased her with a babbling heedlessness
 Which often lured her from herself; but now,
 This night, a rumour wildly blown about
 Came, that Sir Modred had usurped the realm,
 And leagued him with the heathen, while the King

Was waging war on Lancelot: then she thought,
" With what a hate the people and the King
Must hate me," and bow'd down upon her hands
Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd
No silence, brake it, uttering, " Late! so late!
What hour, I wonder, now?" and when she drew
No answer, by and by began to hum
An air the nuns had taught her; " Late, so late!"
Which when she heard, the Queen look'd up, and said,
" O maiden, if indeed you list to sing,
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may weep."
Whereat full willingly sang the little maid.

" Late, late, so late! and dark the night and chill!
Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

" No light had we: for that we do repent;
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

" No light: so late! and dark and chill the nighn'!
O let us in, that we may find the light!
Too late, too late: ye cannot enter now.

" Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?
O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!
No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now."

So sang the novice, while full passionately,
Her head upon her hands, remembering
Her thought when first she came, wept the sad Queen
Then said the little novice prattling to her:

" O pray you, noble lady, weep no more;
But let my words, the words of one so small,
Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,
And if I do not there is penance given—
Comfort your sorrows; for they do not flow
From evil done; right sure am I of that,
Who see your tender grace and stateliness.

But weigh your sorrows with our lord the King's,
 And weighing find them less; for gone is he
 To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot there,
 Round that strong castle where he holds the Queen;
 And Modred whom he left in charge of all,
 The traitor—Ah sweet lady, the King's grief
 For his own self, and his own Queen, and realm,
 Must needs be thrice as great as any of ours.
 For me, I thank the saints, I am not great.
 For if there ever come a grief to me
 I cry my cry in silence, and have done:
 None knows it, and my tears have brought me good:
 But even were the griefs of little ones
 As great as those of great ones, yet this grief
 Is added to the griefs the great must bear,
 That howsoever much they may desire
 Silence, they cannot weep behind a cloud:
 As even here they talk at Almesbury
 About the good King and his wicked Queen,
 And were I such a King with such a Queen,
 Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,
 But were I such a King, it could not be."

Then to her own sad heart mutter'd the Queen,
 " Will the child kill me with her innocent talk? "
 But openly she answer'd, " Must not I,
 If this false traitor have disgraced his lord,
 Grieve with the common grief of all the realm? "

" Yea," said the maid, " this is all woman's grief,
 That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life
 Hath wrought confusion in the Table Round
 Which good King Arthur founded, years ago,
 With signs and miracles and wonders, there
 At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen."

Then thought the Queen within herself again,
 " Will the child kill me with her foolish prate? "
 But openly she spake and said to her:
 " O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,
 What canst thou know of Kings and Tables Round,

Or what of signs and wonders, but the signs
And simple miracles of thy nunnery?"

To whom the little novice garrulously,
"Yea, but I know: the land was full of signs
And wonders ere the coming of the Queen.
So said my father, and himself was knight
Of the great Table—at the founding of it;
And rode thereto from Lyonesse, and he said
That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard
Strange music, and he paused and turning—there,
All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,
Each with a beacon-star upon his head,
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,
He saw them—headland after headland flame
Far on into the rich heart of the west:
And in the light the white mermaiden swam,
And strong man-breasted things stood from the sea,
And sent a deep sea-voice thro' all the land,
To which the little elves of chasm and cleft
Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.
So said my father—yea, and furthermore,
Next morning, while he past the dim-lit woods,
Himself beheld three spirits mad with joy
Come dashing down on a tall wayside flower,
That shook beneath them, as the thistle shakes
When three gray linnets wrangle for the seed:
And still at evenings on before his horse
The flickering fairy-circle wheel'd and broke
Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and broke
Flying, for all the land was full of life.
And when at last he came to Camelot,
A wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand
Swung round the lighted lantern of the hall;
And in the hall itself was such a feast
As never man had dream'd; for every knight
Had whatsoever meat he long'd for served
By hands unseen; and even as he said
Down in the cellars merry bloated things
Shouldered the spigot, straddling on the butts

While the wine ran: so glad were spirits and men
Before the coming of the sinful Queen."

Then spake the Queen and somewhat bitterly.
" Were they so glad? ill prophets were they all,
Spirits and men: could none of them foresee,
Not even thy wise father with his signs
And wonders, what has fall'n upon the realm? "

To whom the novice garrulously again,
" Yea, one, a bard; of whom my father said,
Full many a noble war-song had he sung,
Ev'n in the presence of an enemy's fleet,
Between the steep cliff and the coming wave;
And many a mystic lay of life and death
Had chanted on the smoky mountain-tops,
When round him bent the spirits of the hills
With all their dewy hair blown back like flame:
So said my father—and that night the bard
Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang the King
As well-nigh more than man, and rail'd at those
Who call'd him the false son of Gorloïs:
For there was no man knew from whence he came;
But after tempest, when the long wave broke
All down the thundering shores of Bude and Boss,
There came a day as still as heaven, and then
They found a naked child upon the sands
Of wild Dundagil by the Cornish sea;
And that was Arthur; and they foster'd him
Till he by miracle was approven king:
And that his grave should be a mystery
From all men, like his birth; and could he find
A woman in her womanhood as great
As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,
The twain together well might change the world.
But even in the middle of his song
He falter'd, and his hand fell from the harp,
And pale he turn'd, and reel'd, and would have fall'n,
But that they stay'd him up; nor would he tell
His vision; but what doubt that he foresaw
This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen? "

Then thought the Queen, " Lo! they have set her on,
Our simple-seeming Abbess and her nuns,
To play upon me," and bow'd her head nor spake.
Whereat the novice crying, with clasp'd hands,
Shame on her own garrulity garrulously,
Said the good nuns would check her gadding tongue
Full often, " and, sweet lady, if I seem
To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,
Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales
Which my good father told me, check me too:
Nor let me shame my father's memory, one
Of noblest manners, tho' himself would say
Sir Lancelot had the noblest; and he died,
Kill'd in a tilt, come next, five summers back,
And left me; but of others who remain,
And of the two first-famed for courtesy—
And pray you check me if I ask amiss—
But pray you, which had noblest, while you moved
Among them, Lancelot or our lord the King? "

Then the pale Queen look'd up and answer'd her,
" Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,
Was gracious to all ladies, and the same
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and the King
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and these two
Were the most nobly-mannered men of all;
For manners are not idle, but the fruit
Of loyal nature, and of noble mind."

" Yea," said the maid, " be manners such fair fruit?
Then Lancelot's needs must be a thousand-fold
Less noble, being, as all rumour runs,
The most disloyal friend in all the world."

To which a mournful answer made the Queen.
" O closed about by narrowing nunnery-walls,
What knowest thou of the world, and all its lights
And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe?
If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,

Were for one hour less noble than himself,
 Pray for him that he scape the doom of fire,
 And weep for her, who drew him to his doom.”

“ Yea,” said the little novice, “ I pray for both;
 But I should all as soon believe that his,
 Sir Lancelot’s, were as noble as the King’s,
 As I could think, sweet lady, yours would be
 Such as they are, were you the sinful Queen.”

So she, like many another babbler, hurt
 Whom she would soothe, and harm’d where she would heal;
 For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat
 Fired all the pale face of the Queen, who cried,
 “ Such as thou art be never maiden more
 For ever! thou their tool, set on to plague
 And play upon, and harry me, petty spy
 And traitress.” When that storm of anger brake
 From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,
 White as her veil, and stood before the Queen
 As tremulously as foam upon the beach
 Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,
 And when the Queen had added “ Get thee hence,”
 Fled frightened. Then that other left alone
 Sigh’d, and began to gather heart again,
 Saying in herself, “ The simple, fearful child
 Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful guilt
 Simpler than any child, betrays itself.
 But help me, heaven, for surely I repent.
 For what is true repentance but in thought—
 Not ev’n in inmost thought to think again
 The sins that made the past so pleasant to us:
 And I have sworn never to see him more,
 To see him more.”

And ev’n in saying this,
 Her memory from old habit of the mind
 Went slipping back upon the golden days
 In which she saw him first, when Lancelot came,
 Reputed the best knight and goodliest man,
 Ambassador, to lead her to his lord
 Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead

Of his and her retinue moving, they,
Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love
And sport and tilts and pleasure, (for the time
Was maytime, and as yet no sin was dream'd,)
Rode under groves that look'd a paradise
Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth
That seem'd the heavens upbreaking thro' the earth,
And on from hill to hill, and every day
Bheld at noon in some delicious dale
The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised
For brief repast or afternoon repose
By couriers gone before; and on again,
Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,
That crown'd the state pavilion of the King,
Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen immersed in such a trance,
And moving thro' the past unconsciously,
Came to that point, when first she saw the King
Ride toward her from the city, sigh'd to find
Her journey done, glanced at him, thought him cold,
High, self-contain'd, and passionless, not like him,
"Not like my Lancelot"—while she brooded thus
And grew half-guilty in her thoughts again,
There rode an armed warrior to the doors.
A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery ran,
Then on a sudden a cry, "The King." She sat
Stiff-stricken, listening; but when armed feet
Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors
Rang coming, prone from off her seat she fell,
And grovell'd with her face against the floor:
There with her milkwhite arms and shadowy hair
She made her face a darkness from the King:
And in the darkness heard his armed feet
Pause by her; then came silence, then a voice,
Monotonous and hollow like a Ghost's
Denouncing judgment, but tho' changed, the King's:

"Liest thou here so low, the child of one
I honour'd, happy, dead before thy shame?

Well is it that no child is born of thee.
The children born of thee are sword and fire,
Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,
The craft of kindred and the Godless hosts
Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern Sea.
Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right arm,
The mightiest of my knights, abode with me,
Have everywhere about this land of Christ
In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.
And knowest thou now from whence I come—from him,
From waging bitter war with him; and he,
That did not shun to smite me in worse way,
Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,
He spared to lift his hand against the King
Who made him knight: but many a knight was slain;
And many more, and all his kith and kin
Clave to him, and abode in his own land.
And many more when Modred raised revolt,
Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.
And of this remnant will I leave a part,
True men who love me still, for whom I live,
To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd.
Fear not: thou shalt be guarded till my death.
Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
Have err'd not, that I march to meet my doom.
Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,
That I the King should greatly care to live;
For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.
Bear with me for the last time while I show
Ev'n for thy sake, the sin which thou hast sinn'd.
For when the Roman left us, and their law
Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways
Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a deed
Of prowess done redress'd a random wrong.
But I was first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood-errant of this realm and all
The realms together under me, their Head,
In that fair order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,

To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time.
I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her; for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.
And all this throve until I wedded thee!
Believing, 'lo mine helpmate, one to feel
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy.'
Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
Then others, following these my mightiest knights,
And drawing foul ensample from fair names,
Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
And all thro' thee! so that this life of mine
I guard as God's high gift from scathe and wrong,
Not greatly care to lose; but rather think
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
To sit once more within his lonely hall,
And miss the wonted number of my knights,
And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds
As in the golden days before thy sin.
For which of us, who might be left, could speak
Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at thee?
And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
Thy shadow still would glide from room to room,
And I should evermore be vext with thee
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,

Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.
 For think not, tho' thou would'st not love thy lord,
 Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.
 I am not made of so slight elements.
 Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.
 I hold that man the worst of public foes
 Who either for his own or children's sake,
 To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
 Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house:
 For being thro' his cowardice allow'd
 Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
 She like a new disease, unknown to men,
 Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,
 Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps
 The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse
 With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.
 Worst of the worst were that man he that reigns!
 Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart
 Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
 The mockery of my people, and their bane."

He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch
 Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
 Far off a solitary trumpet blew.
 Then waiting by the doors the warhorse neigh'd
 As at a friend's voice, and he spake again.

" Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,
 I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
 I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
 To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
 My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
 The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce law,
 The doom of treason and the flaming death,
 (When first I learnt thee hidden there) is past.
 The pang—which while I weigh'd thy heart with one
 Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
 Made my tears burn—is also past, in part.
 And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
 Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
 Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest.

But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing! O imperial-moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee—
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's: nay, they never were the King's.
I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd; and mine own flesh,
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries,
'I loathe thee:' yet not less, O Guinevere,
For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life
So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet blow:
They summon me their King to lead mine hosts
Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against my sister's son,
Leagued with the lords of the White Horse and knights
Once mine, and strike him dead, and meet myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.
And thou remaining here wilt learn the event;
But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side, see thee no more,
Farewell!"

And while she grovell'd at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
And, in the darkness o'er her fallen head,
Perceived the waving of his hands that blest.

Then, listening till those armed steps were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found

The casement: "peradventure," so she thought,
 "If I might see his face, and not be seen."
 And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!
 And near him the sad nuns with each a light
 Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen,
 To guard and foster her for evermore.
 And while he spake to these his helm was lower'd,
 To which for crest the golden dragon clung
 Of Britain; so she did not see the face,
 Which then was as an angel's, but she saw,
 Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,
 The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
 Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.
 And even then he turn'd; and more and more
 The moony vapour rolling round the King,
 Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,
 Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray
 And grayer, till himself became as mist
 Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretch'd out her arms and cried aloud,
 "Oh Arthur!" there her voice brake suddenly,
 Then—as a stream that spouting from a cliff
 Fails in mid air, but gathering at the base
 Re-makes itself, and flashes down the vale—
 Went on in passionate utterance.

"Gone—my lord!

Gone thro' my sin to slay and to be slain!
 And he forgave me, and I could not speak.
 Farewell? I should have answer'd his farewell.
 His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the King,
 My own true lord! how dare I call him mine?
 The shadow of another cleaves to me,
 And makes me one pollution: he, the King,
 Call'd me polluted: shall I kill myself?
 What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,
 If soul be soul; nor can I kill my shame;
 No, nor by living can I live it down.
 The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months,
 The months will add themselves and make the years,
 The years will roll into the centuries,

And mine will ever be a name of scorn.
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
Let the world be; that is but of the world.
What else? what hope? I think there was a hope,
Except he mock'd me when he spake of hope;
His hope he call'd it; but he never mocks,
For mockery is the fume of little hearts.
And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven
My wickedness to him, and left me hope
That in mine own heart I can live down sin
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before high God. Ah great and gentle lord,
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint
Among his warring senses, to thy knights—
To whom my false voluptuous pride, that took
Full easily all impressions from below,
Would not look up, or half-despised the height
To which I would not or I could not climb—
I thought I could not breathe in that fine air
That pure severity of perfect light—
I wanted warmth and colour which I found
In Lancelot—now I see thee what thou art,
Thou art the highest and most human too,
Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none
Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?
Now—ere he goes to the great Battle? none:
Myself must tell him in that purer life,
But now it were too daring. Ah my God,
What might I not have made of thy fair world,
Had I but loved thy highest creature here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest:
It surely was my profit had I known:
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
We needs must love the highest when we see it,
Not Lancelot, nor another."

Here her hand

Grasp'd, made her vail her eyes: she look'd and saw
The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said to her,
" Yea, little maid, for am *I* not forgiven? "
Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns

All round her, weeping; and her heart was loosed
Within her, and she wept with these and said:

“ Ye know me then, that wicked one, who broke
The vast design and purpose of the King.
O shut me round with narrowing nunnery-walls,
Meek maidens, from the voices crying ‘ shame.’
I must not scorn myself: he loves me still.
Let no one dream but that he loves me still.
So let me, if you do not shudder at me
Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with you;
Wear black and white, and be a nun like you;
Fast with your fasts, not feasting with your feasts;
Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at your joys,
But not rejoicing; mingle with your rites;
Pray and be pray’d for; lie before your shrines;
Do each low office of your holy house;
Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole
To poor sick people, richer in his eyes
Who ransom’d us, and haler too than I;
And treat their loathsome hurts and heal mine own;
And so wear out in almsdeed and in prayer
The sombre close of that voluptuous day,
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the King.”

She said: they took her to themselves; and she
Still hoping, fearing, “ is it yet too late? ”
Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess died.
Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life,
And for the power of ministration in her,
And likewise for the high rank she had borne,
Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess, lived
For three brief years, and there, an Abbess, past
To where beyond these voices there is peace.

THE HOLY GRAIL

FROM noiseful arms, and acts of prowess done
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,
Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd The Pure,
Had pass'd into the silent life of prayer,
Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for the cowl
The helmet in an abbey far away
From Camelot, there, and not long after, died.

And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the rest,
And honour'd him, and wrought into his heart
A way by love that waken'd love within,
To answer that which came: and as they sat
Beneath a world-old yew-tree, darkening half
The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
That puff'd the swaying branches into smoke
Above them, ere the summer when he died,
The monk Ambrosius question'd Percivale:

“ O brother, I have seen this yew-tree smoke,
Spring after spring, for half a hundred years:
For never have I known the world without,
Nor ever stray'd beyond the pale: but thee,
When first thou camest—such a courtesy
Spake thro' the limbs and in the voice—I knew
For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall;
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,
Some true, some light, but every one of you
Stamp'd with the image of the King; and now
Tell me, what drove thee from the Table Round.
My brother? was it earthly passion crost? ”

“ Nay,” said the knight; “ for no such passion mine.
But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail
Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,

And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out
 Among us in the jousts, while women watch
 Who wins, who falls; and waste the spiritual strength
 Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven."

To whom the monk: "The Holy Grail!—I trust
 We are green in Heaven's eyes; but here too much
 We moulder—as to things without I mean—
 Yet one of your own knights, a guest of ours,
 Told us of this in our refectory,
 But spake with such a sadness and so low
 We heard not half of what he said. What is it?
 The phantom of a cup that comes and goes?"

"Nay, monk! what phantom?" answer'd Percivale.
 "The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord
 Drank at the last sad supper with his own.
 This, from the blessed land of Aromat—
 After the day of darkness, when the dead
 Went wandering o'er Moriah—the good saint,
 Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
 To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
 Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.
 And there awhile it bode; and if a man
 Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once,
 By faith, of all his ills. But then the times
 Grew to such evil that the holy cup
 Was caught away to Heaven, and disappear'd."

To whom the monk: "From our old books I know
 That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,
 And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,
 Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to build;
 And there he built with wattles from the marsh
 A little lonely church in days of yore,
 For so they say, these books of ours, but seem
 Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.
 But who first saw the holy thing to-day?"

"A woman," answer'd Percivale, "a nun,
 And one no further off in blood from me

Than sister; and if ever holy maid
With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid; tho' never maiden glow'd,
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human love,
Which being rudely blunted, glanced and shot
Only to holy things; to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms. And yet,
Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous race,
Across the iron grating of her cell
Beat, and she pray'd and fasted all the more.

“ And he to whom she told her sins, or what
Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man well-nigh a hundred winters old,
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down thro' five or six,
And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord's time. And when King Arthur made
His Table Round, and all men's hearts became
Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come again;
But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it would come,
And heal the world of all their wickedness!
‘ O Father! ’ asked the maiden, ‘ might it come
To me by prayer and fasting? ’ ‘ Nay,’ said he,
‘ I know not, for thy heart is pure as snow.’
And so she pray'd and fasted, till the sun
Shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and I thought
She might have risen and floated when I saw her.

“ For on a day she sent to speak with me.
And when she came to speak, behold her eyes
Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
Beautiful in the light of holiness.
And, ‘ O my brother, Percivale,’ she said,
‘ Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail:
For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound

As of a silver horn from o'er the hills
 Blown, and I thought, " It is not Arthur's use
 To hunt by moonlight;" and the slender sound
 As from a distance beyond distance grew
 Coming upon me—O never harp nor horn,
 Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,
 Was like that music as it came; and then
 Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver beam,
 And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
 Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
 Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed
 With rosy colours leaping on the wall;
 And then the music faded, and the Grail
 Pass'd, and the beam decay'd, and from the walls
 The rosy quiverings died into the night.
 So now the Holy Thing is here again
 Among us, brother, fast thou too and pray,
 And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,
 That so perchance the vision may be seen
 By thee and those, and all the world be heal'd.'

" Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of this
 To all men; and myself fasted and pray'd
 Always, and many among us many a week
 Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost,
 Expectant of the wonder that would be.

" And one there was among us, ever moved
 Among us in white armour, Galahad.
 ' God make thee good as thou art beautiful,'
 Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight; and none,
 In so young youth, was ever made a knight
 Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he heard
 My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze;
 His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd
 Hers, and himself her brother more than I.

" Sister or brother none had he; but some
 Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some said
 Begotten by enchantment—chatterers they,
 Like birds of passage piping up and down,

That gape for flies—we know not whence they come;
For when was Lancelot wanderingly lewd?

“ But she, the wan sweet maiden shore away
Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair
Which made a silken mat-work for her feet;
And out of this she plaited broad and long
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread
And crimson in the belt a strange device,
A crimson grail within a silver beam;
And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,
Saying, ‘ My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,
O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,
I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.
Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,
And break thro’ all, till one will crown thee king
Far in the spiritual city: ’ and as she spake
She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
Thro’ him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
On him, and he believed in her belief.

“ Then came a year of miracle: O brother,
In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,
Fashion’d by Merlin ere he past away,
And carven with strange figures; and in and out
The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll
Of letters in a tongue no man could read.
And Merlin call’d it ‘ The Siege perilous,’
Perilous for good and ill; ‘ for there,’ he said,
‘ No man could sit but he should lose himself: ’
And once by misadvertence Merlin sat
In his own chair, and so was lost; but he,
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin’s doom,
Cried, ‘ If I lose myself I save myself! ’

“ Then on a summer night it came to pass,
While the great banquet lay along the hall,
That Galahad would sit down in Merlin’s chair.

“ And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
A cracking and a riving of the roofs,

And rending, and a blast, and overhead
 Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
 And in the blast there smote along the hall
 A beam of light seven times more clear than day:
 And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
 All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
 And none might see who bare it, and it past.
 But every knight beheld his fellow's face
 As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
 And staring each at other, like dumb men
 Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

“ I sware a vow before them all, that I,
 Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride
 A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
 Until I found and saw it, as the nun
 My sister saw it; and Galahad sware the vow,
 And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin, sware,
 And Lancelot sware, and many among the knights,
 And Gawain sware, and louder than the rest.”

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking him,
 “ What said the King? Did Arthur take the vow? ”

“ Nay, for my lord,” said Percivale, “ the King,
 Was not in hall: for early that same day,
 Scaped thro' a cavern from a bandit hold,
 An outraged maiden sprang into the hall
 Crying on help: for all her shining hair
 Was smear'd with earth, and either milky arm
 Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all she wore
 Torn, as a sail that leaves the rope is torn
 In tempest: so the King arose and went
 To smoke the scandalous hive of those wild bees
 That made such honey in his realm. Howbeit
 Some little of this marvel he too saw,
 Returning o'er the plain that then began
 To darken under Camelot; whence the King
 Look'd up, calling aloud, ‘ Lo there! the roofs
 Of our great hall are rolled in thunder-smoke!
 Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the bolt.’

For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,
As having there so oft with all his knights
Feasted, and as the stateliest under heaven.

“ O brother, had you known our mighty hall,
Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago!
For all the sacred mount of Camelot,
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,
By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing brook,
Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin built.
And four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall:
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
And on the fourth are men with growing wings,
And over all one statue in the mould
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,
And peak’d wings pointed to the Northern Star.
And eastward fronts the statue, and the crown
And both the wings are made of gold, and flame
At sunrise till the people in far fields,
Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,
Behold it, crying, ‘ We have still a king.’

“ And, brother, had you known our hall within,
Broader and higher than any in all the lands!
Where twelve great windows blazon Arthur’s wars,
And all the light that falls upon the board
Streams thro’ the twelve great battles of our King.
Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,
Wealthy with wandering lines of mount and mere,
Where Arthur finds the brand, Excalibur.
And also one to the west, and counter to it,
And blank: and who shall blazon it? when and how?—
O there, perchance, when all our wars are done,
The brand Excalibur will be cast away.

“ So to this hall full quickly rode the King,
In horror lest the work by Merlin wrought,

Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish, wrapt
In unremorseful folds of rolling fire.

“ And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw
The golden dragon sparkling over all:
And many of those who burnt the hold, their arms
Hack’d, and their foreheads grimed with smoke, and sear’d,
Follow’d, and in among bright faces, ours,
Full of the vision, prest: and then the King
Spake to me, being nearest, ‘ Percivale,’
(Because the hall was all in tumult—some
Vowing, and some protesting), ‘ what is this? ’

“ O brother, when I told him what had chanced,
My sister’s vision, and the rest, his face
Darken’d, as I have seen it more than once,
When some brave deed seem’d to be done in vain,
Darken; and ‘ Woe is me, my knights,’ he cried,
‘ Had I been here, ye had not sworn the vow.’
Bold was mine answer, ‘ Had thyself been here,
My King, thou wouldest have sworn.’ ‘ Yea, yea,’ said he,
‘ Art thou so bold and hast not seen the Grail?’

“ ‘ Nay, Lord, I heard the sound, I saw the light,
But since I did not see the Holy Thing,
I sware a vow to follow it till I saw.’

“ Then when he asked us, knight by knight, if any
Had seen it, all their answers were as one:
‘ Nay, Lord, and therefore have we sworn our vows.’

“ ‘ Lo now,’ said Arthur, ‘ have ye seen a cloud?
What go ye into the wilderness to see? ’

“ Then Galahad on the sudden, and in a voice
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call’d,
‘ But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—
“ O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me.” ’

“ ‘ Ah, Galahad, Galahad,’ said the King, ‘ for such

As thou art is the vision, not for these.
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she—
A sign to maim this Order which I made.
But you, that follow but the leader's bell '
(Brother, the King was hard upon his knights)
' Taliessin is our fullest throat of song,
And one hath sung and all the dumb will sing.
Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne
Five knights at once, and every younger knight,
Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,
Till overborne by one, he learns—and ye,
What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor Percivales '
(For thus it pleased the King to range me close
After Sir Galahad); 'nay,' said he, 'but men
With strength and will to right the wrong'd, of power
To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,
Knights that in twelve great battles splash'd and dyed
The strong White Horse in his own heathen blood—
But one hath seen, and all the blind will see.
Go, since your vows are sacred, being made:
Yet—for ye know the cries of all my realm
Pass thro' this hall—how often, O my knights,
Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come and go
Unchallenged, while you follow wandering fires
Lost in the quagmire? Many of you, yea most,
Return no more: ye think I show myself
Too dark a prophet: come now, let us meet
The morrow morn once more in one full field
Of gracious pastime, that once more the King,
Before you leave him for this Quest, may count
The yet-unbroken strength of all his knights,
Rejoicing in that Order which he made.'

" So when the sun broke next from under ground,
All the great table of our Arthur closed
And clash'd in such a tourney and so full,
So many lances broken—never yet
Had Camelot seen the like, since Arthur came;
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength

Was in us from the vision, overthrew
 So many knights that all the people cried,
 And almost burst the barriers in their heat,
 Shouting, ‘Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale!’

“ But when the next day brake from under ground—
 O brother, had you known our Camelot,
 Built by old kings, age after age, so old
 The King himself had fears that it would fall,
 So strange, and rich, and dim; for where the roofs
 Totter’d toward each other in the sky,
 Met foreheads all along the street of those
 Who watch’d us pass; and lower, and where the long
 Rich galleries, lady-laden, weigh’d the necks
 Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,
 Thicker than drops from thunder, showers of flowers
 Fell as we past; and men and boys astride
 On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,
 At all the corners, named us each by name,
 Calling ‘God speed!’ but in the street below
 The knights and ladies wept, and rich and poor
 Wept, and the King himself could hardly speak
 For grief, and in the middle street the Queen,
 Who rode by Lancelot, wail’d and shriek’d aloud,
 ‘This madness has come on us for our sins.’
 And then we reach’d the weirdly-sculptured gate,
 Where Arthur’s wars were render’d mystically,
 And thence departed every one his way.

“ And I was lifted up in heart, and thought
 Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,
 How my strong lance had beaten down the knights,
 So many and famous names; and never yet
 Had heaven appear’d so blue, nor earth so green,
 For all my blood danced in me, and I knew
 That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

“ Thereafter, the dark warning of our King,
 That most of us would follow wandering fires,
 Came like a driving gloom across my mind.
 Then every evil word I had spoken once,

And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, ‘ This Quest is not for thee.’
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death;
And I, too, cried, ‘ This Quest is not for thee.’

“ And on I rode, and when I thought my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then a brook,
With one sharp rapid, where the crisping white
Play’d ever back upon the sloping wave,
And took both ear and eye; and o’er the brook
Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns. ‘ I will rest here,’
I said, ‘ I am not worthy of the Quest; ’
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone,
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns.

“ And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning; and fair the house whereby she sat,
And kind the woman’s eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious; and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who should say,
‘ Rest here; ’ but when I touched her, lo! she, too,
Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed,
And in it a dead babe; and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

“ And on I rode, and greater was my thirst.
Then flash’d a yellow gleam across the world,
And where it smote the plowshare in the field,
The plowman left his plowing, and fell down
Before it; where it glitter’d on her pail,
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell down
Before it, and I knew not why, but thought,
‘ The sun is rising,’ tho’ the sun had risen.
Then was I ware of one that on me moved

In golden armour with a crown of gold
 About a casque all jewels; and his horse
 In golden armour jewell'd everywhere:
 And on the splendour came, flashing me blind;
 And seem'd to me the Lord of all the world,
 Being so huge. But when I thought he meant
 To crush me, moving on me, lo! he, too,
 Opened his arms to embrace me as he came,
 And up I went and touch'd him, and he, too,
 Fell into dust, and I was left alone
 And wearying in a land of sand and thorns.

“ And I rode on and found a mighty hill,
 And on the top, a city wall'd: the spires
 Prick'd with incredible pinnacles into heaven.
 And by the gateway stirr'd a crowd; and these
 Cried to me climbing, ‘ Welcome, Percivale!
 Thou mightiest and thou purest among men!’
 And glad was I and clomb, but found at top
 No man, nor any voice. And thence I past
 Far thro' a ruinous city, and I saw
 That man had once dwelt there; but there I found
 Only one man of an exceeding age.
 ‘ Where is that goodly company,’ said I,
 ‘ That so cried out upon me?’ and he had
 Scarce any voice to answer, and yet gasp'd,
 ‘ Whence and what art thou?’ and even as he spoke
 Fell into dust, and disappear'd, and I
 Was left alone once more, and cried in grief,
 ‘ Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself
 And touch it, it will crumble into dust.’

“ And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,
 Low as the hill was high, and where the vale
 Was lowest, found a chapel and thereby
 A holy hermit in a hermitage,
 To whom I told my phantoms, and he said:

“ ‘ O son, thou hast not true humility,
 The highest virtue, mother of them all;
 For when the Lord of all things made Himself
 Naked of glory for His mortal change,

“Take thou my robe,” she said, “for all is thine,”
And all her form shone forth with sudden light
So that the angels were amazed, and she
Follow’d him down, and like a flying star
Led on the gray-hair’d wisdom of the east;
But her thou hast not known: for what is this
Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins?
Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad.’ When the hermit made an end,
In silver armour suddenly Galahad shone
Before us, and against the chapel door
Laid lance, and enter’d, and we knelt in prayer.
And there the hermit slaked my burning thirst
And at the sacring of the mass I saw
The holy elements alone; but he:
‘Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,
The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine:
I saw the fiery face as of a child
That smote itself into the bread, and went;
And hither am I come; and never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,
This Holy Thing, fail’d from my side, nor come
Cover’d, but moving with me night and day,
Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken’d marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode,
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,
And past thro’ Pagan realms, and made them mine,
And clash’d with Pagan hordes, and bore them down,
And broke thro’ all, and in the strength of this
Come victor. But my time is hard at hand,
And hence I go; and one will crown me king
Far in the spiritual city; and come thou, too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I go.’

“While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on mine,
Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew
One with him, to believe as he believed.
Then, when the day began to wane, we went.

"There rose a hill that none but man could climb,
Scarr'd with a hundred wintry watercourses—
Storm at the top, and when we gain'd it, storm
Round us and death; for every moment glanced
His silver arms and gloom'd: so quick and thick
The lightnings here and there to left and right
Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead,
Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
Sprang into fire: and at the base we found
On either hand, as far as eye could see,
A great black swamp and of an evil smell,
Part black, part whiten'd with the bones of men,
Not to be crost, save that some ancient king
Had built a way, where, link'd with many a bridge,
A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.
And Galahad fled along them bridge by bridge,
And every bridge as quickly as he crost
Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I yearn'd
To follow; and thrice above him all the heavens
Open'd and blazed with thunder such as seem'd
Shoutings of all the sons of God: and first
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,
In silver-shining armour starry-clear;
And o'er his head the holy vessel hung
Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat
If boat it were—I saw not whence it came.
And when the heavens open'd and blazed again
Roaring, I saw him like a silver star—
And had he set the sail, or had the boat
Beconic a living creature clad with wings?
And o'er his head the holy vessel hung
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.
Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars
Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star
I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl—
No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints—
Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot

A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
Which never eyes on earth again shall see.
Then fell the floods of heaven drowning the deep.
And how my feet recross'd the deathful ridge
No memory in me lives; but that I touch'd
The chapel-doors at dawn I know; and thence
Taking my war-horse from the holy man,
Glad that no phantom vext me more, return'd
To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's wars."

"O brother," ask'd Ambrosius—"for in sooth
These ancient books—and they would win thee—teem,
Only I find not there this Holy Grail,
With miracles and marvels like to these,
Not all unlike; which oftentime I read,
Who read but on my breviary with ease,
Till my head swims; and then go forth and pass
Down to the little thorpe that lies so close,
And almost plaster'd like a martin's nest
To these old walls—and mingle with our folk;
And knowing every honest face of theirs,
As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,
And every homely secret in their hearts,
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,
And ills and aches, and teethings, lyings-in,
And mirthful sayings, children of the place,
That have no meaning half a league away:
Or lulling random squabbles when they rise,
Chafferings and chatterings at the market-cross,
Rejoice, small man, in this small world of mine,
Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs—
O brother, saving this Sir Galahad
Came ye on none but phantoms in your quest,
No man, no woman?"

Then, Sir Percivale:

"All men, to one so bound by such a vow,
And women were as phantoms. O, my brother,
Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee
How far I falter'd from my quest and vow?

For after I had lain so many nights
A bedmate of the snail and eft and snake,
In grass and burdock, I was changed to wan
And meagre, and the vision had not come,
And then I chanced upon a goodly town
With one great dwelling in the middle of it;
Thither I made, and there was I disarm'd
By maidens each as fair as any flower:
But when they led me into hall, behold
The Princess of that castle was the one,
Brother, and that one only, who had ever
Made my heart leap; for when I moved of old
A slender page about her father's hall,
And she a slender maiden, all my heart
Went after her with longing: yet we twain
Had never kiss'd a kiss, or vow'd a vow.
And now I came upon her once again,
And one had wedded her, and he was dead,
And all his land and wealth and state were hers.
And while I tarried, every day she set
A banquet richer than the day before
By me; for all her longing and her will
Was toward me as of old; till one fair morn,
I walking to and fro beside a stream
That flash'd across her orchard underneath
Her castle-walls, she stole upon my walk,
And calling me the greatest of all knights,
Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first time,
And gave herself and all her wealth to me.
Then I remember'd Arthur's warning word,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
And the Quest faded in my heart. Anon,
The heads of all her people drew to me,
With supplication both of knees and tongue:
'We have heard of thee: thou art our greatest knight,
Our Lady says it, and we well believe:
Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,
And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land.'
O me, my brother! but one night my vow
Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,
But wail'd and wept, and hated mine own self,

And ev'n the Holy Quest, and all but her;
Then after I was join'd with Galahad
Cared not for her, nor anything upon earth."

Then said the monk, " Poor men, when yule is cold,
Must be content to sit by little fires.
And this am I, so that ye care for me
Ever so little; yea, and blest be Heaven
That brought thee here to this poor house of ours,
Where all the brethren are so hard, to warm
My cold heart with a friend: but O the pity
To find thine own first love once more—to hold,
Hold her a wealthy bride within thine arms,
Or all but hold, and then—cast her aside,
Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed.
For we that want the warmth of double life,
We that are plagued with dreams of something sweet
Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich,—
Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthlywise,
Seeing I never stray'd beyond the cell,
But live like an old badger in his earth,
With earth about him everywhere, despite
All fast and penance. Saw ye none beside,
None of your knights? "

" Yea so," said Percivale:
" One night my pathway swerving east, I saw
The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bors
All in the middle of the rising moon:
And toward him spurr'd and hail'd him, and he me,
And each made joy of either; then he ask'd,
' Where is he? hast thou seen him—Lancelot? ' ' Once,'
Said good Sir Bors, ' he dash'd across me—mad,
And maddening what he rode: and when I cried,
" Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest
So holy? " Lancelot shouted, " Stay me not!
I have been the sluggard, and I ride apace,
For now there is a lion in the way."
So vanish'd.'

" Then Sir Bors had ridden on

Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,
Because his former madness, once the talk
And scandal of our table, had return'd;
For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him
That ill to him is ill to them; to Bors
Beyond the rest: he well had been content
Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have seen,
The Holy Cup of healing; and, indeed,
Being so clouded with his grief and love,
Small heart was his after the Holy Quest:
If God would send the vision, well: if not,
The Quest and he were in the hands of heaven.

" And then, with small adventure met, Sir Bors
Rode to the loneliest tract of all the realm,
And found a people there among their crags,
Our race and blood, a remnant that were left
Paynim amid their circles, and the stones
They pitch up straight to heaven: and their wise men
Were strong in that old magic which can trace
The wandering of the stars, and scoff'd at him
And this high Quest as at a simple thing:
Told him he follow'd—almost Arthur's words—
A mocking fire: ' what other fire than he,
Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom blows,
And the sea rolls, and all the world is warm'd? '
And when his answer chafed them, the rough crowd,
Hearing he had a difference with their priests,
Seized him, and bound and plunged him into a cell
Of great piled stones; and lying bounden there
In darkness thro' innumerable hours
He heard the hollow-ringing heavens sweep
Over him, till by miracle—what else?—
Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and fell,
Such as no wind could move: and thro' the gap
Glimmer'd the streaming scud: then came a night
Still as the day was loud; and thro' the gap
The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table Round—
For, brother, so one night, because they roll
Thro' such a round in heaven, we named the stars,
Rejoicing in ourselves and in our king—

And these, like bright eyes of familiar friends,
In on him shone, ‘ And then to me, to me,’
Said good Sir Bors, ‘ beyond all hopes of mine,
Who scarce had pray’d or ask’d it for myself—
Across the seven clear stars—O grace to me—
In colour like the fingers of a hand
Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail
Glided and past, and close upon it peal’d
A sharp quick thunder.’ Afterwards a maid,
Who kept our holy faith among her kin
In secret, entering, loosed and let him go.”

To whom the monk: “ And I remember now
That pelican on the casque: Sir Bors it was
Who spake so low and sadly at our board;
And mighty reverent at our grace was he:
A square-set man and honest; and his eyes,
An out-door sign of all the warmth within,
Smiled with his lips—a smile beneath a cloud,
But heaven had meant it for a sunny one:
Ay, ay, Sir Bors, who else? But when ye reach’d
The city, found ye all your knights return’d,
Or was there sooth in Arthur’s prophecy,
Tell me, and what said each, and what the King? ”

Then answer’d Percivale: “ And that can I,
Brother, and truly; since the living words
Of so great men as Lancelot and our King
Pass not from door to door and out again,
But sit within the house. O, when we reach’d
The city, our horses stumbling as they trode
On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
Crack’d basilisks, and splinter’d cockatrices,
And shatter’d talbots, which had left the stones
Raw, that they fell from, brought us to the hall.

“ And there sat Arthur on the daïs-throne,
And those that had gone out upon the Quest,
Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of them,
And those that had not, stood before the King.
Who, when he saw me, rose, and bade me hail,

Saying, ‘A welfare in thine eye reproves
 Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee
 On hill, or plain, at sea, or flooding ford.
 So fierce a gale made havock here of late
 Among the strange devices of our kings;
 Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of ours,
 And from the statue Merlin moulded for us
 Half-wrench’d a golden wing; but now—the quest,
 This vision—hast thou seen the Holy Cup,
 That Joseph brought of old to Glastonbury?’

“So when I told him all thyself hast heard,
 Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve
 To pass away into the quiet life,
 He answer’d not, but, sharply turning, ask’d
 Of Gawain, ‘Gawain, was this Quest for thee?’

“‘Nay, lord,’ said Gawain, ‘not for such as I.
 Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
 Who made me sure the Quest was not for me;
 For I was much awearied of the Quest:
 But found a silk pavilion in a field,
 And merry maidens in it; and then this gale
 Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,
 And blew my merry maidens all about
 With all discomfort; yea, and but for this,
 My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant to me.’

“He ceased; and Arthur turn’d to whom at first
 He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering, push’d
 Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught his hand,
 Held it, and there, half-hidden by him, stood,
 Until the King espied him, saying to him,
 ‘Hail, Bors! if ever loyal man and true
 Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail;’ and Bors,
 ‘Ask me not, for I may not speak of it,
 I saw it:’ and the tears were in his eyes.

“Then there remain’d but Lancelot, for the rest
 Spake but of sundry perils in the storm;
 Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,

Our Arthur kept his best until the last;
'Thou, too, my Lancelot,' ask'd the King, 'my friend,
Our mightiest, hath this Quest avail'd for thee?'

" 'Our mightiest!' answer'd Lancelot, with a groan;
'O King!'—and when he paused, methought I spied
A dying fire of madness in his eyes—
'O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier are those that welter in their sin,
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for slime,
Slime of the ditch: but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
And poisonous grew together, each as each,
Not to be pluck'd asunder; and when thy knights
Sware, I sware with them only in the hope
That could I touch or see the Holy Grail
They might be pluck'd asunder. Then I spake
To one most holy saint, who wept and said,
That save they could be pluck'd asunder, all
My quest were but in vain; to whom I vow'd
That I would work according as he will'd.
And forth I went, and while I yearn'd and strove
To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
My madness came upon me as of old,
And whipt me into waste fields far away;
There was I beaten down by little men,
Mean knights, to whom the moving of my sword
And shadow of my spear had been enow
To scare them from me once; and then I came
All in my folly to the naked shore,
Wide flats, where nothing but coarse grasses grew;
But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the sea
Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
Swept like a river, and the clouded heavens
Were shaken with the motion and the sound.
And blackening in the sea-foam sway'd a boat,

Half-swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a chain;
And in my madness to myself I said,
“ I will embark and I will lose myself,
And in the great sea wash away my sin.”
I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.
Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,
And with me drove the moon and all the stars;
And the wind fell, and on the seventh night
I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,
And felt the boat shock earth, and looking up,
Behold, the enchanted towers of Carbonek,
A castle like a rock upon a rock,
With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
And steps that met the breaker! there was none
Stood near it but a lion on each side
That kept the entry, and the moon was full.
Then from the boat I leapt, and up the stairs.
There drew my sword. With sudden-flaring manes
Those two great beasts rose upright like a man,
Each gript a shoulder, and I stood between;
And, when I would have smitten them, heard a voice,
“ Doubt not, go forward; if thou doubt, the beasts
Will tear thee piecemeal.” Then with violence
The sword was dash'd from out my hand, and fell.
And up into the sounding hall I past;
But nothing in the sounding hall I saw
No bench nor table, painting on the wall
Or shield of knight; only the rounded moon
Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.
But always in the quiet house I heard,
Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower
To the eastward: up I climb'd a thousand steps
With pain: as in a dream I seem'd to climb
For ever: at the last I reach'd a door,
A light was in the crannies, and I heard,
“ Glory and joy and honour to our Lord
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail.”
Then in my madness I essay'd the door;
It gave; and thro' a stormy glare, a heat
As from a seventimes-heated furnace, I,

Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
With such a fierceness that I swoon'd away—
O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
All pall'd in crimson samite, and around
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes.
And but for all my madness and my sin,
And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw
That which I saw; but what I saw was veil'd
And cover'd; and this quest was not for me.'

" So speaking, and here ceasing, Lancelot left
The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain—nay,
Brother, I need not tell thee foolish words,—
A reckless and irreverent knight was he,
Now bolden'd by the silence of his King,—
Well, I will tell thee: ' O king, my liege,' he said,
' Hath Gawain fail'd in any quest of thine?
When have I stinted stroke in foughтен field?
But as for thine, my good friend, Percivale,
Thy holy nun and thou have driven men mad,
Yea, made our mightiest madder than our least.
But by mine eyes and by mine ears I swear,
I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,
And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,
To holy virgins in their ecstacies,
Henceforward.'

" ' Deafer,' said the blameless King,
' Gawain, and blinder unto holy things
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,
Being too blind to have desire to see.
But if indeed there came a sign from heaven,
Blessed are Bors, Lancelot and Percivale,
For these have seen according to their sight.
For every fiery prophet in old times,
And all the sacred madness of the bard,
When God made music thro' them, could but speak
His music by the framework and the chord;
And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth.

" ' Nay—but thou errest, Lancelot: never yet
Could all of true and noble in knight and man

Twine round one sin, whatever it might be,
 With such a closeness, but apart there grew,
 Save that he were the swine thou speakest of,
 Some root of knighthood and pure nobleness;
 Whereto see thou, that it may bear its flower.

“ ‘ And spake I not too truly, O my knights?
 Was I too dark a prophet when I said
 To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
 That most of them would follow wandering fires,
 Lost in the quagmire?—lost to me and gone,
 And left me gazing at a barren board,
 And a lean Order—scarce return’d a tithe—
 And out of those to whom the vision came
 My greatest hardly will believe he saw;
 Another hath beheld it afar off,
 And leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
 Cares but to pass into the silent life.
 And one hath had the vision face to face,
 And now his chair desires him here in vain,
 However they may crown him otherwhere.

“ ‘ And some among you held, that if the King
 Had seen the sight he would have sworn the vow:
 Not easily, seeing that the King must guard
 That which he rules, and is but as the hind
 To whom a space of land is given to plough,
 Who may not wander from the allotted field,
 Before his work be done; but, being done,
 Let visions of the night or of the day
 Come, as they will; and many a time they come,
 Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
 This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
 This air that smites his forehead is not air
 But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—
 In moments when he feels he cannot die,
 And knows himself no vision to himself,
 Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
 Who rose again: ye have seen what ye have seen.’

“ So spake the king: I knew not all he meant.”

PELLEAS AND ETTARRE

KING ARTHUR made new knights to fill the gap
Left by the Holy Quest; and as he sat
In hall at old Caerleon, the high doors
Were softly sunder'd, and thro' these a youth,
Pelleas, and the sweet smell of the fields
Past, and the sunshine came along with him.

“ Make me thy knight, because I know, Sir King,
All that belongs to knighthood, and I love,”
Such was his cry; for having heard the King
Had let proclaim a tournament—the prize
A golden circlet and a knightly sword,
Full fain had Pelleas for his lady won
The golden circlet, for himself the sword:
And there were those who knew him near the King
And promised for him: and Arthur made him knight.

And this new knight, Sir Pelleas of the isles—
But lately come to his inheritance,
And lord of many a barren isle was he—
Riding at noon, a day or twain before,
Across the forest call'd of Dean, to find
Caerleon and the King, had felt the sun
Beat like a strong knight on his helm, and reel'd
Almost to falling from his horse; but saw
Near him a mound of even-sloping side,
Whereon a hundred stately beeches grew,
And here and there great hollies under them.
But for a mile all round was open space,
And fern and heath: and slowly Pelleas drew
To that dim day, then binding his good horse
To a tree, cast himself down; and as he lay
At random looking over the brown earth
Thro' that green-glooming twilight of the grove,
It seem'd to Pelleas that the fern without

Burnt as a living fire of emeralds,
 So that his eyes were dazzled looking at it.
 Then o'er it crost the dimness of a cloud
 Floating, and once the shadow of a bird
 Flying, and then a fawn; and his eyes closed.
 And since he loved all maidens, but no maid
 In special, half-awake he whisper'd, "Where?
 O where? I love thee, tho' I know thee not.
 For fair thou art and pure as Guinevere,
 And I will make thee with my spear and sword
 As famous—O my queen, my Guinevere,
 For I will be thine Arthur when we meet."

Suddenly waken'd with a sound of talk
 And laughter at the limit of the wood,
 And glancing thro' the hoary boles, he saw,
 Strange as to some old prophet might have seem'd
 A vision hovering on a sea of fire,
 Damsels in divers colours like the cloud
 Of sunset and sunrise, and all of them
 On horses, and the horses richly trapt
 Breast-high in that bright line of bracken stood:
 And all the damsels talk'd confusedly,
 And one was pointing this way, and one that,
 Because the way was lost.

And Pelleas rose,
 And loosed his horse, and led him to the light.
 There she that seem'd the chief among them said,
 "In happy time behold our pilot-star!
 Youth, we are damsels-errant, and we ride,
 Arm'd as ye see, to tilt against the knights
 There at Caerleon, but have lost our way:
 To right? to left? straight forward? back again?
 Which? tell us quickly."

And Pelleas gazing thought,
 "Is Guinevere herself so beautiful?"
 For large her violet eyes look'd, and her bloom
 A rosy dawn kindled in stainless heavens,
 And round her limbs, mature in womanhood,

And slender was her hand and small her shape,
And but for those large eyes, the haunts of scorn,
She might have seem'd a toy to trifle with,
And pass and care no more. But while he gazed
The beauty of her flesh abash'd the boy,
As tho' it were the beauty of her soul:
For as the base man, judging of the good,
Puts his own baseness in him by default
Of will and nature, so did Pelleas lend
All the young beauty of his own soul to hers,
Believing her; and when she spake to him,
Stammer'd, and could not make her a reply.
For out of the waste islands had he come,
Where saving his own sisters he had known
Scarce any but the women of his isles,
Rough wives, that laugh'd and scream'd against the gulls,
Makers of nets, and living from the sea.

Then with a slow smile turn'd the lady round
And look'd upon her people; and as when
A stone is flung into some sleeping tarn,
The circle widens till it lip the marge,
Spread the slow smile thro' all her company.
Three knights were thereamong; and they too smiled,
Scorning him; for the lady was Ettarre,
And she was a great lady in her land.

Again she said, "O wild and of the woods,
Knowest thou not the fashion of our speech?
Or have the Heavens but given thee a fair face,
Lacking a tongue?"

"O damsel," answer'd he,
"I woke from dreams; and coming out of gloom
Was dazzled by the sudden light, and crave
Pardon: but will ye to Caerleon? I
Go likewise: shall I lead you to the King?"

"Lead then," she said; and thro' the woods they went.
And while they rode, the meaning in his eyes,
His tenderness of manner, and chaste awe,

His broken utterances and bashfulness,
 Were all a burthen to her, and in her heart
 She muttered, " I have lighted on a fool,
 Raw, yet so stale!" But since her mind was bent
 On hearing, after trumpet blown, her name
 And title, " Queen of Beauty," in the lists
 Cried—and beholding him so strong, she thought
 That peradventure he will fight for me,
 And win the circlet: therefore flatter'd him,
 Being so gracious, that he well-nigh deem'd
 His wish by hers was echo'd; and her knights
 And all her damsels too were gracious to him,
 For she was a great lady.

And when they reach'd
 Caerleon, ere they past to lodging, she,
 Taking his hand, " O the strong hand," she said,
 " See! look at mine! but wilt thou fight for me,
 And win me this fine circlet, Pelleas,
 That I may love thee? "

Then his helpless heart
 Leapt, and he cried, " Ay! wilt thou if I win?"
 " Ay, that will I," she answer'd, and she laugh'd,
 And straitly nipt the hand, and flung it from her;
 Then glanced askew at those three knights of hers,
 Till all her ladies laugh'd along with her.

" O happy world," thought Pelleas, " all, meseems,
 Are happy; I the happiest of them all."
 Nor slept that night for pleasure in his blood,
 And green wood-ways, and eyes among the leaves;
 Then being on the morrow knighted, sware
 To love one only. And as he came away,
 The men who met him rounded on their heels
 And wonder'd after him, because his face
 Shone like the countenance of a priest of old
 Against the flame about a sacrifice
 Kindled by fire from heaven: so glad was he.

Then Arthur made vast banquets, and strange knights

From the four winds came in: and each one sat,
Tho' served with choice from air, land, stream, and sea,
Oft in mid-banquet measuring with his eyes
His neighbour's make and might: and Pelleas look'd
Noble among the noble, for he dream'd
His lady loved him, and he knew himself
Loved of the King: and him his new-made knight
Worshipt, whose lightest whisper moved him more
Than all the ranged reasons of the world.

Then blush'd and brake the morning of the jousts,
And this was call'd "The Tournament of Youth:"
For Arthur, loving his young knight, withheld
His older and his mightier from the lists,
That Pelleas might obtain his lady's love,
According to her promise, and remain
Lord of the tourney. And Arthur had the jousts
Down in the flat field by the shore of Usk
Holden: the gilded parapets were crown'd
With faces, and the great tower fill'd with eyes
Up to the summit, and the trumpets blew.
There all day long Sir Pelleas kept the field
With honour: so by that strong hand of his
The sword and golden circlet were achieved.

Then rang the shout his lady loved: the heat
Of pride and glory fired her face; her eye
Sparkled; she caught the circlet from his lance,
And there before the people crown'd herself:
So for the last time she was gracious to him.

Then at Caerleon for a space—her look
Bright for all others, cloudier on her knight—
Linger'd Ettarre: and seeing Pelleas droop,
Said Guinevere, "We marvel at thee much,
O damsel, wearing this unsunny face
To him who won thee glory!" And she said,
"Had ye not held your Lancelot in your bower,
My Queen, he had not won." Whereat the Queen,
As one whose foot is bitten by an ant,
Glanced down upon her, turn'd and went her way.

But after, when her damsels, and herself,
And those three knights all set their faces home,
Sir Pelleas follow'd. She that saw him cried,
"Damsels—and yet I should be shamed to say it—
I cannot bide Sir Baby. Keep him back
Among yourselves. Would rather that we had
Some rough old knight who knew the worldly way,
Albeit grizzlier than a bear, to ride
And jest with: take him to you, keep him off,
And pamper him with papmeat, if ye will,
Old milky fables of the wolf and sheep,
Such as the wholesome mothers tell their boys.
Nay, should ye try him with a merry one
To find his mettle, good: and if he fly us,
Small matter! let him." This her damsels heard,
And mindful of her small and cruel hand,
They, closing round him thro' the journey home,
Acted her hest, and always from her side
Restrain'd him with all manner of device,
So that he could not come to speech with her.
And when she gain'd her castle, upsprang the bridge,
Down rang the grate of iron thro' the groove,
And he was left alone in open field.

"These be the ways of ladies," Pelleas thought,
"To those who love them, trials of our faith.
Yea, let her prove me to the uttermost,
For loyal to the uttermost am I."
So made his moan; and, darkness falling, sought
A priory not far off, there lodged, but rose
With morning every day, and, moist or dry,
Full-arm'd upon his charger all day long
Sat by the walls, and no one open'd to him.

And this persistence turn'd her scorn to wrath.
Then calling her three knights, she charged them, "Out!
And drive him from the walls." And out they came,
But Pelleas overthrew them as they dash'd
Against him one by one; and these return'd,
But still he kept his watch beneath the wall.

Thereon her wrath became a hate; and once,
A week beyond, while walking on the walls
With her three knights, she pointed downward, "Look,
He haunts me—I cannot breathe—besieges me;
Down! strike him! put my hate into your strokes,
And drive him from my walls." And down they went,
And Pelleas overthrew them one by one;
And from the tower above him cried Ettarre,
"Bind him, and bring him in."

He heard her voice;
Then let the strong hand, which had overthrown
Her minion-knights, by those he overthrew
Be bounden straight, and so they brought him in.

Then when he came before Ettarre, the sight
Of her rich beauty made him at one glance
More bondsman in his heart than in his bonds.
Yet with good cheer he spake, "Behold me, Lady,
A prisoner, and the vassal of thy will;
And if thou keep me in thy donjon here,
Content am I so that I see thy face
But once a day; for I have sworn my vows,
And thou hast given thy promise, and I know
That all these pains are trials of my faith,
And that thyself when thou hast seen me strain'd
And sifted to the utmost, wilt at length
Yield me thy love and know me for thy knight."

Then she began to rail so bitterly,
With all her damsels, he was stricken mute;
But when she mock'd his vows and the great King,
Lighted on words: "For pity of thine own self,
Peace, Lady, peace: is he not thine and mine?"
"Thou fool," she said, "I never heard his voice
But long'd to break away. Unbind him now,
And thrust him out of doors; for save he be
Fool to the midmost marrow of his bones,
He will return no more." And those, her three,
Laugh'd, and unbound, and thrust him from the gate.

And after this, a week beyond, again
 She call'd them, saying, "There he watches yet,
 There like a dog before his master's door!
 Kick'd, he returns: do ye not hate him, ye?
 Ye know yourselves: how can ye bide at peace,
 Affronted with his fulsome innocence?
 Are ye but creatures of the board and bed,
 No men to strike? Fall on him all at once,
 And if ye slay him I reck not: if ye fail,
 Give ye the slave mine order to be bound,
 Bind him as heretofore, and bring him in:
 It may be ye shall slay him in his bonds."

She spake; and at her will they couch'd their spears,
 Three against one: and Gawain passing by,
 Bound upon solitary adventure, saw
 Low down beneath the shadow of those towers
 A villainy, three to one: and thro' his heart
 The fire of honour and all noble deeds
 Flash'd, and he call'd, "I strike upon thy side—
 The caitiffs!" "Nay," said Pelleas, "but forbear;
 He needs no aid who doth his lady's will."

So Gawain, looking at the villainy done,
 Forbore, but in his heat and eagerness
 Trembled and quiver'd, as the dog, withheld
 A moment from the vermin that he sees
 Before him, shivers, ere he springs and kills.

And Pelleas overthrew them, one to three;
 And they rose up, and bound, and brought him in.
 Then first her anger, leaving Pelleas, burn'd
 Full on her knights in many an evil name
 Of craven, weakling, and thrice-beaten hound:
 "Yet, take him, ye that scarce are fit to touch,
 Far less to bind, your victor, and thrust him out,
 And let who will release him from his bonds.
 And if he comes again"—there she broke short;
 And Pelleas answer'd, "Lady, for indeed
 I loved you and I deem'd you beautiful,
 I cannot brook to see your beauty marr'd

Thro' evil spite: and if ye love me not,
 I cannot bear to dream you so forsown:
 I had liefer ye were worthy of my love,
 Than to be loved again of you—farewell;
 And tho' ye kill my hope, not yet my love,
 Vex not yourself: ye will not see me more."

While thus he spake, she gazed upon the man
 Of princely bearing, tho' in bonds, and thought,
 " Why have I push'd him from me? this man loves,
 If love there be: yet him I loved not. Why?
 I deem'd him fool? yea, so? or that in him
 A something—was it nobler than myself?—
 Seem'd my reproach? He is not of my kind.
 He could not love me, did he know me well.
 Nay, let him go—and quickly." And her knights
 Laugh'd not, but thrust him bounden out of door.

Forth sprang Gawain, and loosed him from his bonds,
 And flung them o'er the walls; and afterward,
 Shaking his hands, as from a lazarus's rag,
 " Faith of my body," he said, " and art thou not—
 Yea thou art he, whom late our Arthur made
 Knight of his table; yea and he that won
 The circlet? wherefore hast thou so defamed
 Thy brotherhood in me and all the rest,
 As let these caitiffs on thee work their will? "

And Pelleas answer'd, " O, their wills are hers
 For whom I won the circlet; and mine, hers,
 Thus to be bounden, so to see her face,
 Marr'd tho' it be with spite and mockery now,
 Other than when I found her in the woods;
 And tho' she hath me bounden but in spite,
 And all to flout me, when they bring me in,
 Let me be bounden, I shall see her face;
 Else must I die thro' mine unhappiness."

And Gawain answer'd kindly tho' in scorn,
 " Why, let my lady bind me if she will,
 And let my lady beat me if she will:

But an she send her delegate to thrall
 These fighting hands of mine—Christ kill me then
 But I will slice him handless by the wrist,
 And let my lady sear the stump for him,
 Howl as he may. But hold me for your friend:
 Come, ye know nothing: here I pledge my troth,
 Yea, by the honour of the Table Round,
 I will be leal to thee and work thy work,
 And tame thy jailing princess to thine hand.
 Lend me thine horse and arms, and I will say
 That I have slain thee. She will let me in
 To hear the manner of thy fight and fall;
 Then, when I come within her counsels, then
 From prime to vespers will I chant thy praise
 As prowest knight and truest lover, more
 Than any have sung thee living, till she long
 To have thee back in lusty life again,
 Not to be bound, save by white bonds and warm,
 Dearer than freedom. Wherefore now thy horse
 And armour: let me go: be comforted:
 Give me three days to melt her fancy, and hope
 The third night hence will bring thee news of gold.”

Then Pelleas lent his horse and all his arms,
 Saving the goodly sword, his prize, and took
 Gawain’s, and said, “Betray me not, but help—
 Art thou not he whom men call light-of-love?”

“Ay,” said Gawain, “for women be so light.”
 Then bounded forward to the castle walls,
 And raised a bugle hanging from his neck,
 And winded it, and that so musically
 That all the old echoes hidden in the wall
 Rang out like hollow woods at huntingtide.

Up ran a score of damsels to the tower;
 “Avaunt,” they cried, “our lady loves thee not.”
 But Gawain lifting up his visor said,
 “Gawain am I, Gawain of Arthur’s court,
 And I have slain this Pelleas whom ye hate:

Behold his horse and armour. Open gate,
And I will make you merry."

And down they ran,
Her damsels, crying to their lady, " Lo!
Pelleas is dead—he told us—he that hath
His horse and armour: will ye let him in?
He slew him! Gawain, Gawain of the court,
Sir Gawain—there he waits below the wall,
Blowing his bugle as who should say him nay."

And so, leave given, straight on thro' open door
Rode Gawain, whom she greeted courteously.
" Dead, is it so? " she ask'd. " Ay, ay," said he,
" And oft in dying cried upon your name."
" Pity on him," she answer'd, " a good knight,
But never let me bide one hour at peace."
" Ay," thought Gawain, " and ye be fair enow:
But I to your dead man hath given my troth,
That whom ye loathe him will I make you love."

So those three days, aimless about the land,
Lost in a doubt, Pelleas wandering
Waited, until the third night brought a moon
With promise of large light on woods and ways.

The night was hot: he could not rest, but rode
Ere midnight to her walls, and bound his horse
Hard by the gates. Wide open were the gates,
And no watch kept; and in thro' these he past,
And heard but his own steps, and his own heart
Beating, for nothing moved but his own self,
And his own shadow. Then he crost the court,
And saw the postern portal also wide
Yawning; and up a slope of garden, all
Of roses white and red, and wild ones mixt
And overgrowing them, went on, and found,
Here too, all hush'd below the mellow moon,
Save that one rivulet from a tiny cave
Came lightening downward, and so spilt itself
Among the roses, and was lost again.

Then was he ware that white pavilions rose,
 Three from the bushes, gilden-peakt: in one,
 Red after revel, droned her lurdane knights
 Slumbering, and their three squires across their feet:
 In one, their malice on the placid lip
 Froz'n by sweet sleep, four of her damsels lay:
 And in the third, the circlet of the jousts
 Bound on her brow, were Gawain and Ettarre.

Back, as a hand that pushes thro' the leaf
 To find a nest and feels a snake, he drew:
 Back, as a coward slinks from what he fears
 To cope with, or a traitor proven, or hound
 Beaten, did Pelleas in an utter shame
 Creep with his shadow thro' the court again,
 Fingering at his sword-handle until he stood
 There on the castle-bridge once more, and thought,
 "I will go back, and slay them where they lie."

And so went back and seeing them yet in sleep
 Said, "Ye, that so dishallow the holy sleep,
 Your sleep is death," and drew the sword, and thought,
 "What! slay a sleeping knight? the King hath bound
 And sworn me to this brotherhood;" again,
 "Alas that ever a knight should be so false."
 Then turn'd, and so return'd, and groaning laid
 The naked sword athwart their naked throats,
 There left it, and them sleeping; and she lay,
 The circlet of the tourney round her brows,
 And the sword of the tourney across her throat.

And forth he past, and mounting on his horse
 Stared at her towers that, larger than themselves
 In their own darkness, throng'd into the moon.
 Then crush'd the saddle with his thighs, and clench'd
 His hands, and madden'd with himself and moan'd:

"Would they have risen against me in their blood
 At the last day? I might have answer'd them
 Even before high God. O towers so strong,
 Huge, solid, would that even while I gaze

The crack of earthquake shivering to your base
Split you, and Hell burst up your harlot roofs
Bellowing, and charr'd you thro' and thro' within,
Black as the harlot's heart—hollow as a skull!
Let the fierce east scream thro' your eyelet-holes,
And whirl the dust of harlots round and round
In dung and nettles! hiss, snake—I saw him there—
Let the fox bark, let the wolf yell. Who yells
Here in the still sweet summer night, but I—
I, the poor Pelleas whom she call'd her fool?
Fool, beast—he, she, or I? myself most fool;
Beast too, as lacking human wit—disgraced,
Dishonour'd all for trial of true love—
Love?—we be all alike: only the king
Hath made us fools and liars. O noble vows!
O great and sane and simple race of brutes
That own no lust because they have no law!
For why should I have loved her to my shame?
I loathe her, as I loved her to my shame.
I never loved her, I but lusted for her—
Away—”

He dash'd the rowel into his horse,
And bounded forth and vanish'd thro' the night.

Then she, that felt the cold touch on her throat,
Awaking knew the sword, and turn'd herself
To Gawain: “ Liar, for thou hast not slain
This Pelleas! here he stood and might have slain
Me and thyself.” And he that tells the tale
Says that her ever-veering fancy turn'd
To Pelleas, as the one true knight on earth,
And only lover; and thro' her love her life
Wasted and pined, desiring him in vain.

But he by wild and way, for half the night,
And over hard and soft, striking the sod
From out the soft, the spark from off the hard,
Rode till the star above the wakening sun,
Beside that tower where Percivale was cowl'd,
Glanced from the rosy forehead of the dawn.

For so the words were flash'd into his heart
 He knew not whence or wherefore: "O sweet star,
 Pure on the virgin forehead of the dawn."
 And there he would have wept, but felt his eyes
 Harder and drier than a fountain bed
 In summer: thither came the village girls
 And linger'd talking, and they come no more
 Till the sweet heavens have fill'd it from the heights
 Again with living waters in the change
 Of seasons: hard his eyes; harder his heart
 Seem'd; but so weary were his limbs, that he,
 Gasping, "Of Arthur's hall am I, but here,
 Here let me rest and die," cast himself down,
 And gulph'd his griefs in inmost sleep; so lay,
 Till shaken by a dream, that Gawain fired
 The hall of Merlin, and the morning star
 Reel'd in the smoke, brake into flame, and fell.

He woke, and being ware of some one nigh,
 Sent hands upon him, as to tear him, crying,
 "False! and I held thee pure as Guinevere."

But Percivale stood near him and replied,
 "Am I but false as Guinevere is pure?
 Or art thou mazed with dreams? or being one
 Of our free-spoken Table hast not heard
 That Lancelot"—there he check'd himself and paused.

Then fared it with Sir Pelleas as with one
 Who gets a wound in battle, and the sword
 That made it plunges thro' the wound again,
 And pricks it deeper: and he shrank and wail'd,
 "Is the Queen false?" and Percivale was mute.
 "Have any of our Round Table held their vows?"
 And Percivale made answer not a word.
 "Is the king true?" "The king!" said Percivale.
 "Why then let men couple at once with wolves.
 What! art thou mad?"

But Pelleas, leaping up,
 Ran thro' the doors and vaulted on his horse

And fled: small pity upon his horse had he,
 Or on himself, or any, and when he met
 A cripple, one that held a hand for alms—
 Hunch'd as he was, and like an old dwarf-elm
 That turns its back on the salt blast, the boy
 Paused not but overrode him, shouting, “ False,
 And false with Gawain! ” and so left him bruised
 And batter'd, and fled on, and hill and wood
 Went ever streaming by him till the gloom,
 That follows on the turning of the world,
 Darken'd the common path: he twitch'd the reins,
 And made his beast that better knew it, swerve
 Now off it and now on; but when he saw
 High up in heaven the hall that Merlin built,
 Blackening against the dead-green stripes of even,
 “ Black nest of rats,” he groan'd, “ ye build too high.”

Not long thereafter from the city gates
 Issued Sir Lancelot riding airily,
 Warm with a gracious parting from the Queen,
 Peace at his heart, and gazing at a star
 And marvelling what it was: on whom the boy,
 Across the silent seeded meadow-grass
 Borne, clash'd: and Lancelot, saying, “ What name hast
 thou
 That ridest here so blindly and so hard? ”
 “ I have no name,” he shouted, “ a scourge am I,
 To lash the treasons of the Table Round.”
 “ Yea, but thy name? ” “ I have many names,” he cried:
 “ I am wrath and shame and hate and evil fame,
 And like a poisonous wind I pass to blast
 And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the Queen.”
 “ First over me,” said Lancelot, “ shalt thou pass.”
 “ Fight therefore,” yell'd the other, and either knight
 Drew back a space, and when they closed, at once
 The weary steed of Pelleas floundering flung
 His rider, who called out from the dark field,
 “ Thou art false as Hell: slay me: I have no sword.”
 Then Lancelot, “ Yea, between thy lips—and sharp;
 But here will I disedge it by thy death.”
 “ Slay then,” he shriek'd, “ my will is to be slain.”

And Lancelot, with his heel upon the fall'n,
Rolling his eyes, a moment stood, then spake:
"Rise, weakling; I am Lancelot; say thy say."

And Lancelot slowly rode his war-horse back
To Camelot, and Sir Pelleas in brief while
Caught his unbroken limbs from the dark field,
And follow'd to the city. It chanced that both
Brake into hall together, worn and pale.
There with her knights and dames was Guinevere.
Full wonderingly she gazed on Lancelot
So soon return'd, and then on Pelleas, him
Who had not greeted her, but cast himself
Down on a bench, hard-breathing. "Have ye fought?"
She ask'd of Lancelot. "Ay, my Queen," he said.
"And thou hast overthrown him?" "Ay, my Queen."
Then she, turning to Pelleas, "O young knight,
Hath the great heart of knighthood in thee fail'd
So far thou canst not bide, unfowardly,
A fall from him?" Then, for he answer'd not,
"Or hast thou other griefs? If I, the Queen,
May help them, loose thy tongue, and let me know."
But Pelleas lifted up an eye so fierce
She quail'd; and he, hissing, "I have no sword,"
Sprang from the door into the dark. The Queen
Look'd hard upon her lover, he on her;
And each foresaw the dolorous day to be:
And all talk died, as in a grove all song
Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey,
Then a long silence came upon the hall,
And Modred thought, "The time is hard at hand."

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

THAT story which the bold Sir Bedivere,
First made and latest left of all the knights,
Told, when the man was no more than a voice
In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other minds.

Before that last weird battle in the west
There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain kill'd
In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain blown
Along a wandering wind, and past his ear
Went shrilling "Hollow, hollow all delight!
Hail, king! to-morrow thou shalt pass away.
Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee.
And I am blown along a wandering wind,
And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight."
And fainter onward, like wild birds that change
Their season in the night and wail their way
From cloud to cloud, down the long wind the dream
Shrill'd; but in going mingled with dim cries
Far in the moonlit haze among the hills,
As of some lonely city sack'd by night,
When all is lost, and wife and child with wail
Pass to new lords; and Arthur woke and call'd,
"Who spake? A dream. O light upon the wind,
Thine, Gawain, was the voice—are these dim cries
Thine? or doth all that haunts the waste and wild
Mourn, knowing it will go along with me?"

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and spake:
"O me, my king, let pass whatever will,
Elves, and the harmless glamour of the field;
But in their stead thy name and glory cling
To all high places like a golden cloud
For ever: but as yet thou shalt not pass.

Light was Gawain in life, and light in death
 Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man;
 And care not thou for dreams from him, but rise—
 I hear the steps of Modred in the west,
 And with him many of thy people, and knights
 Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but grosser grown
 Than heathen, spitting at their vows and thee.
 Right well in heart they know thee for the King.
 Arise, go forth and conquer as of old.”

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
 “Far other is this battle in the west
 Whereto we move, than when we strove in youth,
 And thrust the heathen from the Roman wall,
 And shook him thro’ the north. Ill doom is mine
 To war against my people and my knights.
 The king who fights his people fights himself.
 And they my knights, who loved me once, the stroke
 That strikes them dead is as my death to me.
 Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way
 Thro’ this blind haze, which ever since I saw
 One lying in the dust at Almesbury,
 Hath folded in the passes of the world.”

Then rose the King and moved his host by night,
 And ever push’d Sir Modred, league by league,
 Back to the sunset bound of Lyonnesse—
 A land of old upheaven from the abyss
 By fire, to sink into the abyss again;
 Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt,
 And the long mountains ended in a coast
 Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
 The phantom circle of a moaning sea.
 There the pursuer could pursue no more,
 And he that fled no further fly the King;
 And there, that day when the great light of heaven
 Burn’d at his lowest in the rolling year,
 On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed.
 Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
 Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west.
 A deathwhite mist slept over sand and sea:

Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it, drew
Down with his blood, till all his heart was cold
With formless fear; and ev'n on Arthur fell
Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought,
For friend and foe were shadows in the mist,
And friend slew friend not knowing whom he slew;
And some had visions out of golden youth,
And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
Look in upon the battle; and in the mist
Was many a noble deed, many a base,
And chance and craft and strength in single fights,
And ever and anon with host to host
Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,
Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash
Of battleaxes on shatter'd helms, and shrieks
After the Christ, of those who falling down
Looked up for heaven, and only saw the mist;
And shouts of heathen and the traitor knights,
Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blasphemies,
Sweat, writhings, anguish, labouring of the lungs
In that close mist, and cryings for the light,
Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead.

Last, as by some one deathbed after wail
Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death
Or deathlike swoon, thus over all that shore,
Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
A dead hush fell; but when the dolorous day
Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came
A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew
The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale king glanced across the field
Of battle: but no man was moving there;
Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
Nor yet of heathen; only the wan wave
Brake in among dead faces, to and fro
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down
Tumbling the hollow helmets, of the fallen,
And shiver'd brands that once had fought with Rome,
And rolling far along the gloomy shores
The voice of days of old and days to be.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,
And whiter than the mist that all day long
Had held the field of battle was the King:

“Hearest thou this great voice that shakes the world,
And wastes the narrow realm whereon we move,
And beats upon the faces of the dead,
My dead, as tho’ they had not died for me?—
O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fall’n
Confusion, till I know not what I am,
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be King.
Behold, I seem but King among the dead.”

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere: “My King,
King everywhere! and so the dead have kings,
There also will I worship thee as King.
Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live
Who love thee; but who hates thee, he that brought
The heathen back among us, yonder stands,
Modred, unharmed, the traitor of thine house.”

Then spake the King: “My house hath been my doom.
But call not thou this traitor of my house
Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.
My house are rather they who sware my vows,
Yea, even while they brake them, own’d me King.
And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
When all the purport of my throne hath fail’d,
That quick or dead thou holdest me for King.
King am I, whatsoever be their cry,
And one last act of kinghood shalt thou see
Yet, ere I pass.” And uttering this the King
Made at the man: then Modred smote his liege
Hard on that helm which many a heathen sword
Had beaten thin; while Arthur at one blow,
Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and all but slain himself, he fell.

So all day long the noise of battle roll’d
Among the mountains by the winter sea;

Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonesse about their lord,
King Arthur. Then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land:
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
“ The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more; but let what will be, be.
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known:
But now delay not: take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere:
Watch what thou seëst, and lightly bring me word.”

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
“ It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm—
A little thing may harm a wounded man;

Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept,
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:
For all the half twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewelry. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw: but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag."

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
"Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight:
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie."

Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud:

" And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? Deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but emp y breath
And rumours of a doubt? But were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, ' King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost."

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
" What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard? "

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
 "I heard the water lapping on the crag,
 And the long ripple washing in the reeds."

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
 "Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
 Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
 Authority forgets a dying King,
 Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
 That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
 For thou, the latest-left of all my knights
 In whom should meet the offices of all,
 Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
 Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
 Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
 Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
 And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
 But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
 I will arise and slay thee with my hands."

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
 And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
 Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword,
 And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
 Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
 And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
 Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
 Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
 By night, with noises of the northern sea.
 So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:
 But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
 Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
 And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
 "Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
 Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:

" Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.

Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere."

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
" My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words;
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, " Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die."
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang

Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake;
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms,
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold: and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, "Place me in the barge;"
So to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parch'd with dust;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shatter'd column lay the King;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?

Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole Round Table is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.”

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:
“ The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)—
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.”

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan

That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

At length he groan'd, and turning slowly clomb
The last hard footstep of that iron crag;
Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet, and cried,
" He passes to be King among the dead,
And after healing of his grievous wound
He comes again; but—if he come no more—
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black boat,
Who shriek'd and wail'd, the three whereat we gazed
On that high day, when, clothed with living light,
They stood before his throne in silence, friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need? "

Then from the dawn it seem'd there came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb
E'en to the highest he could climb, and saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light.
And the new sun rose bringing the new year.

ENOCH ARDEN
AND OTHER POEMS

ENOCH ARDEN

LONG lines of cliff breaking have left a chasm;
And in the chasm are foam and yellow sands;
Beyond, red roofs about a narrow wharf
In cluster; then a moulder'd church; and higher
A long street climbs to one tall-tower'd mill;
And high in heaven behind it a gray down
With Danish barrows; and a hazelwood,
By autumn nutters haunted, flourishes
Green in a cuplike hollow of the down.

Here on this beach a hundred years ago,
Three children of three houses, Annie Lee,
The prettiest little damsel in the port,
And Philip Ray the miller's only son,
And Enoch Arden, a rough sailor's lad
Made orphan by a winter shipwreck, play'd
Among the waste and lumber of the shore,
Hard coils of cordage, swarthy fishing-nets,
Anchors of rusty fluke, and boats updrawn;
And built their castles of dissolving sand
To watch them overflow'd, or following up
And flying the white breaker, daily left
The little footprint daily wash'd away.

A narrow cave ran in beneath the cliff:
In this the children play'd at keeping house.
Enoch was host one day, Philip the next,
While Annie still was mistress; but at times
Enoch would hold possession for a week:
“This is my house and this my little wife.”
“Mine too,” said Philip, “turn and turn about:”
When, if they quarrell'd, Enoch stronger-made
Was master: then would Philip, his blue eyes
All flooded with the helpless wrath of tears,
Shriek out, “I hate you, Enoch,” and at this

The little wife would weep for company,
And pray them not to quarrel for her sake,
And say she would be little wife to both.

But when the dawn of rosy childhood past,
And the new warmth of life's ascending sun
Was felt by either, either fixt his heart
On that one girl; and Enoch spoke his love,
But Philip loved in silence; and the girl
Seem'd kinder unto Philip than to him;
But she loved Enoch; tho' she knew it not,
And would if ask'd deny it. Enoch set
A purpose evermore before his eyes,
To hoard all savings to the uttermost,
To purchase his own boat, and make a home
For Annie: and so prosper'd that at last
A luckier or a bolder fisherman,
A carefuller in peril, did not breathe
For leagues along that breaker-beaten coast
Than Enoch. Likewise had he served a year
On board a merchantman, and made himself
Full sailor; and he thrice had pluck'd a life
From the dread sweep of the down-streaming seas:
And all men look'd upon him favourably:
And ere he touch'd his one-and-twentieth May
He purchased his own boat, and made a home
For Annie, neat and nestlike, halfway up
The narrow street that clamber'd toward the mill.

Then, on a golden autumn eventide,
The younger people making holiday,
With bag and sack and basket, great and small,
Went nutting to the hazels. Philip stay'd
(His father lying sick and needing him)
An hour behind; but as he climb'd the hill,
Just where the prone edge of the wood began
To feather toward the hollow, saw the pair,
Enoch and Annie, sitting hand-in-hand,
His large gray eyes and weather-beaten face
All-kindled by a still and sacred fire,
That burn'd as on an altar. Philip look'd,

And in their eyes and faces read his doom;
Then, as their faces drew together, groan'd,
And slipt aside, and like a wounded life
Crept down into the hollows of the wood;
There, while the rest were loud in merrymaking,
Had his dark hour unseen, and rose and past
Bearing a lifelong hunger in his heart.

So these were wed, and merrily rang the bells,
And merrily ran the years, seven happy years,
Seven happy years of health and competence,
And mutual love and honourable toil;
With children; first a daughter. In him woke,
With his first babe's first cry, the noble wish
To save all earnings to the uttermost,
And give his child a better bringing-up
Than his had been, or hers; a wish renew'd,
When two years after came a boy to be
The rosy idol of her solitudes,
While Enoch was abroad on wrathful seas,
Or often journeying landward; for in truth
Enoch's white horse, and Enoch's ocean-spoil
In ocean-smelling osier, and his face,
Rough-redden'd with a thousand winter gales,
Not only to the market-cross were known,
But in the leafy lanes behind the down,
Far as the portal-warding lion-whelp,
And peacock-yewtree of the lonely Hall,
Whose Friday fare was Enoch's ministering.

Then came a change, as all things human change.
Ten miles to northward of the narrow port
Open'd a larger haven: thither used
Enoch at times to go by land or sea;
And once when there, and clambering on a mast
In harbour, by mischance he slipt and fell:
A limb was broken when they lifted him;
And while he lay recovering there, his wife
Bore him another son, a sickly one:
Another hand crept too across his trade
Taking her bread and theirs: and on him fell,

Altho' a grave and staid God-fearing man,
Yet lying thus inactive, doubt and gloom.
He seem'd, as in a nightmare of the night,
To see his children leading evermore
Low miserable lives of hand-to-mouth,
And her, he loved, a beggar: then he pray'd,
" Save them from this, whatever comes to me."
And while he pray'd, the master of that ship
Enoch had served in, hearing his mischance,
Came, for he knew the man and valued him,
Reporting of his vessel China-bound,
And wanting yet a boatswain. Would he go?
There yet were many weeks before she sail'd,
Sail'd from this port. Would Enoch have the place?
And Enoch all at once assented to it,
Rejoicing at that answer to his prayer.

So now that shadow of mischance appear'd
No graver than as when some little cloud
Cuts off the fiery highway of the sun,
And isles a light in the offing: yet the wife—
When he was gone—the children—what to do?
Then Enoch lay long-pondering on his plans;
To sell the boat—and yet he loved her well—
How many a rough sea had he weather'd in her!
He knew her, as a horseman knows his horse—
And yet to sell her—then with what she brought
Buy goods and stores—set Annie forth in trade
With all that seamen needed or their wives—
So might she keep the house while he was gone.
Should he not trade himself out yonder? go
This voyage more than once? yea twice or thrice—
As oft as needed—last, returning rich,
Become the master of a larger craft,
With fuller profits lead an easier life,
Have all his pretty young ones educated,
And pass his days in peace among his own.

Thus Enoch in his heart determined all:
Then moving homeward came on Annie pale,
Nursing the sickly babe, her latest-born.

Forward she started with a happy cry,
And laid the feeble infant in his arms;
Whom Enoch took, and handled all his limbs,
Appraised his weight and fondled fatherlike,
But had no heart to break his purposes
To Annie, till the morrow, when he spoke.

Then first since Enoch's golden ring had girt
Her finger, Annie fought against his will:
Yet not with brawling opposition she,
But manifold entreaties, many a tear,
Many a sad kiss by day by night renew'd
(Sure that all evil would come out of it)
Besought him, supplicating, if he cared
For her or his dear children, not to go.
He not for his own self caring but her,
Her and her children, let her plead in vain;
So grieving held his will, and bore it thro'.

For Enoch parted with his old sea-friend,
Bought Annie goods and stores, and set his hand
To fit their little streetward sitting-room
With shelf and corner for the goods and stores.
So all day long till Enoch's last at home,
Shaking their pretty cabin, hammer and axe,
Auger and saw, while Annie seem'd to hear
Her own death-scaffold raising, shrill'd and rang,
Till this was ended, and his careful hand,—
The space was narrow,—having order'd all
Almost as neat and close as Nature packs
Her blossom or her seedling, paused; and he,
Who needs would work for Annie to the last,
Ascending tired, heavily slept till morn.

And Enoch faced this morning of farewell
Brightly and boldly. All his Annie's fears,
Save, as his Annie's, were a laughter to him.
Yet Enoch as a brave God-fearing man
Bow'd himself down, and in that mystery
Where God-in-man is one with man-in-God,
Pray'd for a blessing on his wife and babes

Whatever came to him: and then he said,
 " Annie, this voyage by the grace of God
 Will bring fair weather yet to all of us.
 Keep a clean hearth and a clear fire for me,
 For I'll be back, my girl, before you know it."
 Then lightly rocking baby's cradle, " and he,
 This pretty, puny, weakly little one,—
 Nay—for I love him all the better for it—
 God bless him, he shall sit upon my knees
 And I will tell him tales of foreign parts,
 And make him merry, when I come home again.
 Come Annie, come, cheer up before I go."

Him running on thus hopefully she heard,
 And almost hoped herself; but when he turn'd
 The current of his talk to graver things
 In sailor fashion roughly sermonising
 On providence and trust in Heaven, she heard,
 Heard and not heard him; as the village girl,
 Who sets her pitcher underneath the spring,
 Musing on him that used to fill it for her,
 Hears and not hears, and lets it overflow.

At length she spoke, " O Enoch, you are wise;
 And yet for all your wisdom well know I
 That I shall look upon your face no more."

" Well then," said Enoch, " I shall look on yours.
 Annie, the ship I sail in passes here
 (He named the day), get you a seaman's glass,
 Spy out my face, and laugh at all your fears."

But when the last of those last moments came,
 " Annie, my girl, cheer up, be comforted,
 Look to the babes, and till I come again,
 Keep everything shipshape, for I must go.
 And fear no more for me; or if you fear
 Cast all your cares on God; that anchor holds.
 Is He not yonder in those uttermost
 Parts of the morning? if I flee to these

Can I go from Him? and the sea is His,
The sea is His: He made it."

Enoch rose,

Cast his strong arms about his drooping wife,
And kiss'd his wonder-stricken little ones;
But for the third, the sickly one, who slept
After a night of feverous wakefulness,
When Annie would have raised him Enoch said,
"Wake him not; let him sleep; how should the child
Remember this?" and kiss'd him in his cot.
But Annie from her baby's forehead clipt
A tiny curl, and gave it: this he kept
Thro' all his future; but now hastily caught
His bundle, waved his hand, and went his way.

She when the day, that Enoch mention'd, came,
Borrow'd a glass, but all in vain: perhaps
She could not fix the glass to suit her eye;
Perhaps her eye was dim, hand tremulous;
She saw him not: and while he stood on deck
Waving, the moment and the vessel past.

Ev'n to the last dip of the vanishing sail
She watch'd it, and departed weeping for him;
Then, tho' she mourn'd his absence as his grave,
Set her sad will no less to chime with his,
But threw not in her trade, not being bred
To barter, nor compensating the want
By shrewdness, neither capable of lies,
Nor asking overmuch and taking less,
And still foreboding "what would Enoch say?"
For more than once, in days of difficulty
And pressure, had she sold her wares for less
Than what she gave in buying what she sold:
She fail'd and sadden'd knowing it; and thus,
Expectant of that news which never came,
Gain'd for her own a scanty sustenance,
And lived a life of silent melancholy.

Now the third child was sickly-born and grew

Yet sicklier, tho' the mother cared for it
 With all a mother's care: nevertheless,
 Whether her business often call'd her from it,
 Or thro' the want of what it needed most,
 Or means to pay the voice who best could tell
 What most it needed—howsoe'er it was,
 After a lingering,—ere she was aware,—
 Like the caged bird escaping suddenly,
 The little innocent soul flitted away.

In that same week when Annie buried it,
 Philip's true heart, which hunger'd for her peace
 (Since Enoch left he had not look'd upon her),
 Smote him, as having kept aloof so long.

“ Surely,” said Philip, “ I may see her now,
 May be some little comfort; ” therefore went,
 Past thro' the solitary room in front,
 Paused for a moment at an inner door,
 Then struck it thrice, and, no one opening,
 Enter'd; but Annie, seated with her grief,
 Fresh from the burial of her little one,
 Cared not to look on any human face,
 But turn'd her own toward the wall and wept.
 Then Philip standing up said falteringly,
 “ Annie, I came to ask a favour of you.”

He spoke; the passion in her moan'd reply,
 “ Favour from one so sad and so forlorn
 As I am! ” half abash'd him; yet unask'd,
 His bashfulness and tenderness at war,
 He set himself beside her, saying to her:

“ I came to speak to you of what he wish'd,
 Enoch, your husband: I have ever said
 You chose the best among us—a strong man:
 For where he fixt his heart he set his hand
 To do the thing he will'd, and bore it thro'.
 And wherefore did he go this weary way,
 And leave you lonely? not to see the world—
 For pleasure?—nay, but for the wherewithal
 To give his babes a better bringing-up

Than his had been, or yours: that was his wish.
And if he come again, vext will he be
To find the precious morning hours were lost.
And it would vex him even in his grave,
If he could know his babes were running wild
Like colts about the waste. So, Annie, now—
Have we not known each other all our lives?
I do beseech you by the love you bear
Him and his children not to say me nay—
For, if you will, when Enoch comes again
Why then he shall repay me—if you will,
Annie—for I am rich and well-to-do.
Now let me put the boy and girl to school:
This is the favour that I came to ask.”

Then Annie with her brows against the wall
Answer'd, “ I cannot look you in the face;
I seem so foolish and so broken down.
When you came in my sorrow broke me down;
And now I think your kindness breaks me down;
But Enoch lives; that is borne in on me:
He will repay you: money can be repaid;
Not kindness such as yours.”

And Philip ask'd,
“ Then you will let me, Annie? ”

There she turn'd,
She rose, and fixt her swimming eyes upon him,
And dwelt a moment on his kindly face,
Then calling down a blessing on his head
Caught at his hand, and wrung it passionately,
And past into the little garth beyond.
So lifted up in spirit he moved away.

Then Philip put the boy and girl to school,
And bought them needful books, and everyway,
Like one who does his duty by his own,
Made himself theirs; and tho' for Annie's sake,
Fearing the lazy gossip of the port,
He oft denied his heart his dearest wish,

And seldom crost her threshold, yet he sent
 Gifts by the children, garden-herbs and fruit,
 The late and early roses from his wall,
 Or conies from the down, and now and then,
 With some pretext of fineness in the meal
 To save the offence of charitable, flour
 From his tall mill that whistled on the waste.

But Philip did not fathom Annie's mind:
 Scarce could the woman when he came upon her,
 Out of full heart and boundless gratitude
 Light on a broken word to thank him with.
 But Philip was her children's all-in-all;
 From distant corners of the street they ran
 To greet his hearty welcome heartily;
 Lords of his house and of his mill were they;
 Worried his passive ear with petty wrongs
 Or pleasures, hung upon him, play'd with him
 And call'd him Father Philip. Philip gain'd
 As Enoch lost; for Enoch seem'd to them
 Uncertain as a vision or a dream,
 Faint as a figure seen in early dawn
 Down at the far end of an avenue,
 Going we know not where: and so ten years,
 Since Enoch left his hearth and native land,
 Fled forward, and no news of Enoch came.

It chanced one evening Annie's children long'd
 To go with others, nutting to the wood,
 And Annie would go with them; then they begg'd
 For Father Philip (as they call'd him) too:
 Him, like the working bee in blossom-dust,
 Blanch'd with his mill, they found; and saying to him,
 "Come with us, Father Philip," he denied;
 But when the children pluck'd at him to go,
 He laugh'd, and yielded readily to their wish,
 For was not Annie with them? and they went.

But after scaling half the weary down,
 Just where the prone edge of the wood began
 To feather toward the hollow, all her force

Fail'd her; and sighing, "let me rest," she said:
So Philip rested with her well-content;
While all the younger ones with jubilant cries
Broke from their elders, and tumultuously
Down thro' the whitening hazels made a plunge
To the bottom, and dispersed, and bent or broke
The lithe reluctant boughs to tear away
Their tawny clusters, crying to each other
And calling, here and there, about the wood.

But Philip sitting at her side forgot
Her presence, and remember'd one dark hour
Here in this wood, when like a wounded life
He crept into the shadow: at last he said,
Lifting his honest forehead, "Listen, Annie,
How merry they are down yonder in the wood."
"Tired, Annie?" for she did not speak a word.
"Tired?" but her face had fall'n upon her hands;
At which, as with a kind of anger in him,
"The ship was lost," he said, "the ship was lost!
No more of that! why should you kill yourself
And make them orphans quite?" And Annie said,
"I thought not of it: but—I know not why—
Their voices make me feel so solitary."

Then Philip coming somewhat closer spoke.
"Annie, there is a thing upon my mind,
And it has been upon my mind so long,
That tho' I know not when it first came there,
I know that it will out at last. O Annie,
It is beyond all hope, against all chance,
That he who left you ten long years ago
Should still be living; well then—let me speak:
I grieve to see you poor and wanting help:
I cannot help you as I wish to do
Unless—they say that women are so quick—
Perhaps you know what I would have you know—
I wish you for my wife. I fain would prove
A father to your children: I do think
They love me as a father: I am sure
That I love them as if they were mine own;

And I believe, if you were fast my wife,
 That after all these sad uncertain years,
 We might be still as happy as God grants
 To any of His creatures. Think upon it:
 For I am well-to-do—no kin, no care,
 No burthen, save my care for you and yours:
 And we have known each other all our lives,
 And I have loved you longer than you know."

Then answer'd Annie; tenderly she spoke:
 " You have been as God's good angel in our house.
 God bless you for it, God reward you for it,
 Philip, with something happier than myself.
 Can one love twice? can you be ever loved
 As Enoch was? what is it that you ask?"
 " I am content," he answer'd, " to be loved
 A little after Enoch." " O," she cried,
 Scared as it were, " dear Philip, wait a while:
 If Enoch comes—but Enoch will not come—
 Yet wait a year, a year is not so long:
 Surely I shall be wiser in a year:
 O wait a little!" Philip sadly said,
 " Annie, as I have waited all my life
 I well may wait a little." " Nay," she cried,
 " I am bound: you have my promise—in a year:
 Will you not bide your year as I bide mine?"
 And Philip answer'd, " I will bide my year."

Here both were mute, till Philip glancing up
 Beheld the dead flame of the fallen day
 Pass from the Danish barrow overhead;
 Then fearing night and chill for Annie rose,
 And sent his voice beneath him thro' the wood.
 Up came the children laden with their spoil;
 Then all descended to the port, and there
 At Annie's door he paused and gave his hand,
 Saying gently, " Annie, when I spoke to you,
 That was your hour of weakness. I was wrong.
 I am always bound to you, but you are free."
 Then Annie weeping answer'd, " I am bound."

She spoke; and in one moment as it were,
While yet she went about her household ways,
Ev'n as she dwelt upon his latest words,
That he had loved her longer than she knew,
That autumn into autumn flash'd again,
And there he stood once more before her face,
Claiming her promise. "Is it a year?" she ask'd.
"Yes, if the nuts," he said, "be ripe again:
Come out and see." But she—she put him off—
So much to look to—such a change—a month—
Give her a month—she knew that she was bound—
A month—no more. Then Philip with his eyes
Full of that lifelong hunger, and his voice
Shaking a little like a drunkard's hand,
"Take your own time, Annie, take your own time."
And Annie could have wept for pity of him;
And yet she held him on delayingly
With many a scarce-believable excuse,
Trying his truth and his long-sufferance,
Till half another year had slipt away.

By this the lazy gossips of the port,
Abhorrent of a calculation crost,
Began to chafe as at a personal wrong.
Some thought that Philip did but trifle with her;
Some that she but held off to draw him on;
And others laugh'd at her and Philip too,
As simple folk that knew not their own minds;
And one, in whom all evil fancies clung
Like serpent eggs together, laughingly
Would hint at worse in either. Her own son
Was silent, tho' he often look'd his wish;
But evermore the daughter prest upon her
To wed the man so dear to all of them
And lift the household out of poverty;
And Philip's rosy face contracting grew
Careworn and wan; and all these things fell on her
Sharp as reproach.

At last one night it chanced
That Annie could not sleep, but earnestly

Pray'd for a sign, " my Enoch, is he gone? "

Then compass'd round by the blind wall of night
 Brook'd not the expectant terror of her heart,
 Started from bed, and struck herself a light,
 Then desperately seized the holy Book,
 Suddenly set it wide to find a sign,
 Suddenly put her finger on the text,
 " Under the palm-tree." That was nothing to her:
 No meaning there: she closed the Book and slept:
 When lo! her Enoch sitting on a height,
 Under a palm-tree, over him the Sun:
 " He is gone," she thought, " he is happy, he is singing
 Hosanna in the highest: yonder shines
 The Sun of Righteousness, and these be palms
 Whereof the happy people strowing cried,
 ' Hosanna in the highest! '" Here she woke,
 Resolved, sent for him and said wildly to him,
 " There is no reason why we should not wed."
 " Then for God's sake," he answer'd, " both our sakes,
 So you will wed me, let it be at once."

So these were wed and merrily rang the bells,
 Merrily rang the bells and they were wed.
 But never merrily beat Annie's heart.
 A footstep seem'd to fall beside her path,
 She knew not whence; a whisper on her ear,
 She knew not what; nor loved she to be left
 Alone at home, nor ventured out alone.
 What ail'd her then, that ere she enter'd, often
 Her hand dwelt lingeringly on the latch,
 Fearing to enter: Philip thought he knew:
 Such doubts and fears were common to her state,
 Being with child: but when her child was born,
 Then her new child was as herself renew'd,
 Then the new mother came about her heart,
 Then her good Philip was her all-in-all,
 And that mysterious instinct wholly died.

And where was Enoch? prosperously sail'd
 The ship *Good Fortune*, tho' at setting forth
 The Biscay, roughly ridging eastward, shook

And almost overwhelm'd her, yet unext
She slipt across the summer of the world,
Then after a long tumble about the Cape
And frequent interchange of foul and fair,
She passing thro' the summer world again,
The breath of heaven came continually
And sent her sweetly by the golden isles,
Till silent in her oriental haven.

There Enoch traded for himself, and bought
Quaint monsters for the market of those times,
A gilded dragon, also, for the babes.

Less lucky her home-voyage: at first indeed
Thro' many a fair sea-circle, day by day,
Scarce-rocking, her full-busted figure-head
Stared o'er the ripple feathering from her bows:
Then follow'd calms, and then winds variable,
Then baffling, a long course of them; and last
Storm, such as drove her under moonless heavens
Till hard upon the cry of "breakers" came
The crash of ruin, and the loss of all
But Enoch and two others. Half the night,
Buoy'd upon floating tackle and broken spars,
These drifted, stranding on an isle at morn
Rich, but the loneliest in a lonely sea.

No want was there of human sustenance,
Soft fruitage, mighty nuts, and nourishing roots;
Nor save for pity was it hard to take
The helpless life so wild that it was tame.
There in a seaward-gazing mountain-gorge
They built, and thatch'd with leaves of palm, a hut,
Half hut, half native cavern. So the three,
Set in this Eden of all plenteousness,
Dwelt with eternal summer, ill-content.

For one, the youngest, hardly more than boy,
Hurt in that night of sudden ruin and wreck,
Lay lingering out a five-years' death-in-life.
They could not leave him. After he was gone,

The two remaining found a fallen stem;
 And Enoch's comrade, careless of himself,
 Fire-hollowing this in Indian fashion, fell
 Sun-stricken, and that other lived alone.
 In those two deaths he read God's warning, "wait."

The mountain wooded to the peak, the lawns
 And winding glades high up like ways to Heaven,
 The slender coco's drooping crown of plumes,
 The lightning flash of insect and of bird,
 The lustre of the long convolvulus
 That coil'd around the stately stems, and ran
 Ev'n to the limit of the land, the glows
 And glories of the broad belt of the world,
 All these he saw; but what he fain had seen
 He could not see, the kindly human face,
 Nor ever hear a kindly voice, but heard
 The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl,
 The league-long roller thundering on the reef,
 The moving whisper of huge trees that branch'd
 And blossom'd in the zenith, or the sweep
 Of some precipitous rivulet to the wave,
 As down the shore he ranged, or all day long
 Sat often in the seaward-gazing gorge,
 A shipwreck'd sailor, waiting for a sail:
 No sail from day to day, but every day
 The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts
 Among the palms and ferns and precipices;
 The blaze upon the waters to the east;
 The blaze upon his island overhead;
 The blaze upon the waters to the west;
 Then the great stars that globed themselves in Heaven,
 The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again
 The scarlet shafts of sunrise—but no sail.

There often as he watch'd or seem'd to watch,
 So still, the golden lizard on him paused,
 A phantom made of many phantoms moved
 Before him haunting him, or he himself
 Moved haunting people, things and places, known
 Far in a darker isle beyond the line;

The babes, their babble, Annie, the small house,
The climbing street, the mill, the leafy lanes,
The peacock-yewtree and the lonely Hall,
The horse he drove, the boat he sold, the chill
November dawns and dewy-glooming downs,
The gentle shower, the smell of dying leaves,
And the low moan of leaden-colour'd seas.

Once likewise, in the ringing of his ears,
Tho' faintly, merrily—far and far away—
He heard the pealing of his parish bells;
Then, tho' he knew not wherefore, started up
Shuddering, and when the beauteous hateful isle
Return'd upon him, had not his poor heart
Spoken with That, which being everywhere
Lets none, who speaks with Him, seem all alone,
Surely the man had died of solitude.

Thus over Enoch's early-silvering head
The sunny and rainy seasons came and went
Year after year. His hopes to see his own,
And pace the sacred old familiar fields,
Not yet had perish'd, when his lonely doom
Came suddenly to an end. Another ship
(She wanted water) blown by baffling winds,
Like the *Good Fortune*, from her destined course,
Stay'd by this isle, not knowing where she lay:
For since the mate had seen at early dawn
Across a break on the mist-wreathen isle
The silent water slipping from the hills,
They sent a crew that landing burst away
In search of stream or fount, and fill'd the shores
With clamour. Downward from his mountain gorge
Stept the long-hair'd long-bearded solitary,
Brown, looking hardly human, strangely clad,
Muttering and mumbling, idiot-like it seem'd,
With inarticulate rage, and making signs
They knew not what: and yet he led the way
To where the rivulets of sweet water ran;
And ever as he mingled with the crew,
And heard them talking, his long-bounden tongue

Was loosen'd, till he made them understand;
 Whom, when their casks were fill'd, they took aboard:
 And there the tale he utter'd brokenly,
 Scarce-credited at first but more and more,
 Amazed and melted all who listen'd to it:
 And clothes they gave him and free passage home;
 But oft he work'd among the rest and shook
 His isolation from him. None of these
 Came from his county, or could answer him,
 If question'd, aught of what he cared to know.
 And dull the voyage was with long delays,
 The vessel scarce seaworthy; but evermore
 His fancy fled before the lazy wind
 Returning, till beneath a clouded moon
 He like a lover down thro' all his blood
 Drew in the dewy meadowy morning-breath
 Of England, blown across her ghostly wall:
 And that same morning officers and men
 Levied a kindly tax upon themselves,
 Pitying the lonely man, and gave him it:
 Then moving up the coast they landed him,
 Ev'n in that harbour whence he sail'd before.

There Enoch spoke no word to any one,
 But homeward—home—what home? had he a home?
 His home, he walk'd. Bright was that afternoon,
 Sunny but chill; till drawn thro' either chasm,
 Where either haven open'd on the deeps,
 Roll'd a sea-haze and whelm'd the world in gray;
 Cut off the length of highway on before,
 And left but narrow breadth to left and right
 Of wither'd holt or tilth or pasturage.
 On the nigh-naked tree the Robin piped
 Disconsolate, and thro' the dripping haze
 The dead weight of the dead leaf bore it down:
 Thicker the drizzle grew, deeper the gloom;
 Last, as it seem'd, a great mist-blotted light
 Flared on him, and he came upon the place.

Then down the long street having slowly stolen,
 His heart foreshadowing all calamity,

His eyes upon the stones, he reach'd the home
Where Arnie lived and loved him, and his babes
In those far-off seven happy years were born;
But finding neither light nor murmur there
(A bill of sale gleam'd thro' the drizzle), crept
Still downward thinking, "dead or dead to me!"

Down to the pool and narrow wharf he went,
Seeking a tavern which of old he knew,
A front of timber-crost antiquity,
So propt, worm-eaten, ruinously old,
He thought it must have gone; but he was gone
Who kept it; and his widow, Miriam Lane,
With daily-dwindling profits held the house;
A haunt of brawling seamen once, but now
Stiller, with yet a bed for wandering men.
There Enoch rested silent many days.

But Miriam Lane was good and garrulous,
Nor let him be, but often breaking in,
Told him, with other annals of the port,
Not knowing—Enoch was so brown, so bow'd,
So broken—all the story of his house.
His baby's death, her growing poverty,
How Philip put her little ones to school,
And kept them in it, his long wooing her,
Her slow consent, and marriage, and the birth
Of Philip's child: and o'er his countenance
No shadow past, nor motion: any one,
Regarding, well had deem'd he felt the tale
Less than the teller: only when she closed,
"Enoch, poor man, was cast away and lost,"
He, shaking his gray head pathetically,
Repeated muttering "cast away and lost;"
Again in deeper inward whispers, "lost!"

But Enoch yearn'd to see her face again;
"If I might look on her sweet face again
And know that she is happy." So the thought
Haunted and harass'd him, and drove him forth,
At evening when the dull November day

Was growing duller twilight, to the hill.
 There he sat down gazing on all below;
 There did a thousand memories roll upon him,
 Unspeakable for sadness. By and by
 The ruddy square of comfortable light,
 Far-blazing from the rear of Philip's house,
 Allured him, as the beacon-blaze allures
 The bird of passage, till he madly strikes
 Against it, and beats out his weary life.

For Philip's dwelling fronted on the street,
 The latest house to landward; but behind,
 With one small gate that open'd on the waste,
 Flourish'd a little garden square and wall'd:
 And in it thronged an ancient evergreen,
 A yewtree, and all round it ran a walk
 Of shingle, and a walk divided it:
 But Enoch shunn'd the middle walk and stole
 Up by the wall, behind the yew; and thence
 That which he better might have shunn'd, if griefs
 Like his have worse or better, Enoch saw.

For cups and silver on the burnish'd board
 Sparkled and shone; so genial was the hearth:
 And on the right hand of the hearth he saw
 Philip, the slighted suitor of old times,
 Stout, rosy, with his babe across his knees;
 And o'er her second father stoopt a girl,
 A later but a loftier Annie Lee,
 Fair-hair'd and tall, and from her lifted hand
 Dangled a length of ribbon and a ring
 To tempt the babe, who rear'd his creasy arms,
 Caught at and ever miss'd it, and they laugh'd:
 And on the left hand of the hearth he saw
 The mother glancing often toward her babe,
 But turning now and then to speak with him,
 Her son, who stood beside her tall and strong,
 And saying that which pleased him, for he smiled.

Now when the dead man come to life beheld
 His wife his wife no more, and saw the babe

Hers, yet not his, upon the father's knee,
And all the warmth, the peace, the happiness,
And his own children tall and beautiful,
And him, that other, reigning in his place,
Lord of his rights and of his children's love,—
Then he, tho' Miriam Lane had told him all,
Because things seen are mightier than things heard,
Stagger'd and shook, holding the branch, and fear'd
To send abroad a shrill and terrible cry,
Which in one moment, like the blast of doom,
Would shatter all the happiness of the hearth.

He therefore turning softly like a thief,
Lest the harsh shingle should grate underfoot,
And feeling all along the garden-wall,
Lest he should swoon and tumble and be found,
Crept to the gate, and open'd it, and closed,
As lightly as a sick man's chamber-door,
Behind him, and came out upon the waste.

And there he would have knelt, but that his knees
Were feeble, so that falling prone he dug
His fingers into the wet earth, and pray'd.

“ Too hard to bear! why did they take me thence?
O God Almighty, blessed Saviour, Thou
That did'st uphold me on my lonely isle,
Uphold me, Father, in my loneliness
A little longer! aid me, give me strength
Not to tell her, never to let her know.
Help me not to break in upon her peace.
My children too! must I not speak to these?
They know me not. I should betray myself.
Never: no father's kiss for me—the girl
So like her mother, and the boy, my son.”

There speech and thought and nature fail'd a little,
And he lay tranced; but when he rose and paced
Back toward his solitary home again,
All down the long and narrow street he went
Beating it in upon his weary brain,
As tho' it were the burthen of a song,
“ Not to tell her, never to let her know.”

He was not all unhappy. His resolve
Upbore him, and firm faith, and evermore
Prayer from a living source within the will,
And beating up thro' all the bitter world,
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,
Kept him a living soul. "This miller's wife,"
He said to Miriam, "that you told me of,
Has she no fear that her first husband lives?"
"Ay, ay, poor soul," said Miriam, "fear enow!
If you could tell her you had seen him dead,
Why, that would be her comfort;" and he thought,
"After the Lord has call'd me she shall know,
I wait His time," and Enoch set himself,
Scorning an alms, to work whereby to live.
Almost to all things could he turn his hand.
Cooper he was and carpenter, and wrought
To make the boatmen fishing-nets, or help'd
At lading and unlading the tall barks,
That brought the stinted commerce of those days;
Thus earn'd a scanty living for himself:
Yet since he did but labour for himself,
Work without hope, there was not life in it
Whereby the man could live; and as the year
Roll'd itself round again to meet the day
When Enoch had return'd, a languor came
Upon him, gentle sickness, gradually
Weakening the man, till he could do no more,
But kept the house, his chair, and last his bed.
And Enoch bore his weakness cheerfully.
For sure no gladlier does the stranded wreck
See thro' the gray skirts of a lifting squall
The boat that bears the hope of life approach
To save the life despaired of, than he saw
Death dawning on him, and the close of all.

For thro' that dawning gleam'd a kindlier hope
On Enoch thinking, "after I am gone,
Then may she learn I loved her to the last."
He call'd aloud for Miriam Lane and said,
"Woman, I have a secret—only swear,
Before I tell you—swear upon the book

Not to reveal it, till you see me dead."

"Dead," clamour'd the good woman, "hear him talk!
I warrant, man, that we shall bring you round."

"Swear," added Enoch sternly, "on the book."

And on the book, half-frighted, Miriam swore.

Then Enoch rolling his gray eyes upon her,
"Did you know Enoch Arden of this town?"

"Know him?" she said; "I knew him far away.
Ay, ay, I mind him coming down the street;
Held his head high, and cared for no man, he."

Slowly and sadly Enoch answer'd her;

"His head is low, and no man cares for him.
I think I have not three days more to live;
I am the man." At which the woman gave
A half-incredulous, half-hysterical cry.

"You Arden, you! nay,—sure he was a foot
Higher than you be." Enoch said again,

"My God has bow'd me down to what I am;
My grief and solitude have broken me;
Nevertheless, know you that I am he
Who married—but that name has twice been changed—
I married her who married Philip Ray.

Sit, listen." Then he told her of his voyage,
His wreck, his lonely life, his coming back,
His gazing in on Annie, his resolve,
And how he kept it. As the woman heard,
Fast flow'd the current of her easy tears,
While in her heart she yearn'd incessantly
To rush abroad all round the little haven,
Proclaiming Enoch Arden and his woes;
But awed and promise-bounden she forbore,
Saying only, "See your bairns before you go!
Eh, let me fetch 'em, Arden," and arose
Eager to bring them down, for Enoch hung
A moment on her words, but then replied.

"Woman, disturb me not now at the last,
But let me hold my purpose till I die.
Sit down again; mark me and understand,
While I have power to speak. I charge you now,
When you shall see her, tell her that I died

Blessing her, praying for her, loving her;
 Save for the bar between us, loving her
 As when she laid her head beside my own.
 And tell my daughter Annie, whom I saw
 So like her mother, that my latest breath
 Was spent in blessing her and praying for her.
 And tell my son that I died blessing him.
 And say to Philip that I blest him too;
 He never meant us anything but good.
 But if my children care to see me dead,
 Who hardly knew me living, let them come,
 I am their father; but she must not come,
 For my dead face would vex her after-life.
 And now there is but one of all my blood,
 Who will embrace me in the world-to-be:
 This hair is his: she cut it off and gave it,
 And I have borne it with me all these years,
 And thought to bear it with me to my grave;
 But now my mind is changed, for I shall see him,
 My babe in bliss: wherefore when I am gone,
 Take, give her this, for it may comfort her:
 It will moreover be a token to her,
 That I am he."

He ceased; and Miriam Lane
 Made such a voluble answer promising all,
 That once again he roll'd his eyes upon her
 Repeating all he wish'd, and once again
 She promised.

Then the third night after this,
 While Enoch slumber'd motionless and pale,
 And Miriam watch'd and dozed at intervals,
 There came so loud a calling of the sea,
 That all the houses in the haven rang.
 He woke, he rose, he spread his arms abroad
 Crying with a loud voice, "A sail! a sail!
 I am saved;" and so fell back and spoke no more.

So past the strong heroic soul away.
 And when they buried him the little port
 Had seldom seen a costlier funeral.

AYLMER'S FIELD

1793

DUST are our frames; and, gilded dust, our pride
Looks only for a moment whole and sound;
Like that long-buried body of the king,
Found lying with his urns and ornaments,
Which at a touch of light, an air of heaven,
Slipt into ashes and was found no more.

Here is a story which in rougher shape
Came from a grizzled cripple, whom I saw
Sunning himself in a waste field alone—
Old, and a mine of memories—who had served,
Long since, a bygone Rector of the place,
And been himself a part of what he told.

SIR AYLMER AYLMER that almighty man,
The county God—in whose capacious hall,
Hung with a hundred shields, the family tree
Sprang from the midriff of a prostrate king—
Whose blazing wyvern weathercock'd the spire,
Stood from his walls and wing'd his entry-gates
And swang besides on many a windy sign—
Whose eyes from under a pyramidal head
Saw from his windows nothing save his own—
What lovelier of his own had he than her,
His only child, his Edith, whom he loved
As heiress and not heir regretfully?
But “he that marries her marries her name,”
This fiat somewhat soothed himself and wife,
His wife a faded beauty of the Baths,
Insipid as the Queen upon a card;
Her all of thought and bearing hardly more
Than his own shadow in a sickly sun.

A land of hops and poppy-mingled corn,
 Little about it stirring save a brook!
 A sleepy land where under the same wheel
 The same old rut would deepen year by year;
 Where almost all the village had one name;
 Where Aylmer follow'd Aylmer at the Hall
 And Averill Averill at the Rectory
 Thrice over; so that Rectory and Hall,
 Bound in an immemorial intimacy,
 Were open to each other; tho' to dream
 That Love could bind them closer well had made
 The hoar hair of the Baronet bristle up
 With horror, worse than had he heard his priest
 Preach an inverted scripture, sons of men
 Daughters of God; so sleepy was the land.

And might not Averill, had he will'd it so,
 Somewhere beneath his own low range of roofs,
 Have also set his many-shielded tree?
 There was an Aylmer-Averill marriage once,
 When the red rose was redder than itself,
 And York's white rose as red as Lancaster's,
 With wounded peace which each had prick'd to death.
 "Not proven," Averill said, or laughingly,
 "Some other race of Averills"—prov'n or no,
 What cared he? what, if other or the same?
 He lean'd not on his fathers but himself.
 But Leolin, his brother, living oft
 With Averill, and a year or two before
 Call'd to the bar, but ever call'd away
 By one low voice to one dear neighbourhood,
 Would often, in his walks with Edith, claim
 A distant kinship to the gracious blood
 That shook the heart of Edith hearing him.

Sanguine he was: a but less vivid hue
 Than of that islet in the chestnut-bloom
 Flamed in his cheek; and eager eyes, that still
 Took joyful note of all things joyful, beam'd,
 Beneath a manelike mass of rolling gold,
 Their best and brightest, when they dwelt on hers,

Edith, whose pensive beauty, perfect else,
But subject to the season or the mood,
Shone like a mystic star between the less
And greater glory varying to and fro,
We know not wherefore; bounteously made,
And yet so finely, that a troublous touch
Thinn'd, or would seem to thin her in a day,
A joyous to dilate, as toward the light.
And these had been together from the first.
Leolin's first nurse was, five years after, hers:
So much the boy foreran; but when his date
Doubled her own, for want of playmates, he
(Since Averill was a decad and a half
His elder, and their parents underground)
Had lost his ball and flown his kite, and roll'd
His hoop to pleasure Edith, with her dipt
Against the rush of the air in the prone swing,
Made blossom-ball or daisy-chain, arranged
Her garden, sow'd her name and kept it green
In living letters, told her fairy-tales,
Show'd her the fairy footings on the grass,
The little dells of cowslip, fairy palms,
The petty marestail forest, fairy pines,
Or from the tiny pitted target blew
What look'd a flight of fairy arrows aim'd
All at one mark, all hitting: make-believes
For Edith and himself: or else he forged,
But that was later, boyish histories
Of battle, bold adventure, dungeon, wreck,
Flights, terrors, sudden rescues, and true love
Crown'd after trial; sketches rude and faint,
But where a passion yet unborn perhaps
Lay hidden as the music of the moon
Sleeps in the plain eggs of the nightingale.
And thus together, save for college-times
Or Temple-eaten terms, a couple, fair
As ever painter painted, poet sang,
Or Heav'n in lavish bounty moulded, grew.
And more and more, the maiden woman-grown,
He wasted hours with Averill; there, when first
The tented winter-field was broken up

Into that phalanx of the summer spears
 That soon should wear the garland; there again
 When burr and bine were gather'd; lastly there
 At Christmas; ever welcome at the Hall,
 On whose dull sameness his full tide of youth
 Broke with a phosphorescence cheering even
 My lady; and the Baronet yet had laid
 No bar between them: dull and self-involved,
 Tall and erect, but bending from his height
 With half-allowing smiles for all the world,
 And mighty courteous in the main—his pride
 Lay deeper than to wear it as his ring—
 He, like an Aylmer in his Aylmerism,
 Would care no more for Leolin's walking with her
 Than for his old Newfoundland's, when they ran
 To loose him at the stables, for he rose
 Two-footed at the limit of his chain,
 Roaring to make a third: and how should Love,
 Whom the cross-lightnings of four chance-met eyes
 Flash into fiery life from nothing, follow
 Such dear familiarities of dawn?
 Seldom, but when he does, Master of all.

So these young hearts not knowing that they loved,
 Not she at least, nor conscious of a bar
 Between them, nor by plight or broken ring
 Bound, but an immemorial intimacy,
 Wander'd at will, but oft accompanied
 By Averill: his, a brother's love, that hung
 With wings of brooding shelter o'er her peace,
 Might have been other, save for Leolin's—
 Who knows? but so they wander'd, hour by hour
 Gather'd the blossom that rebloom'd, and drank
 The magic cup that fill'd itself anew.

A whisper half reveal'd her to herself.
 For out beyond her lodges, where the brook
 Vocal, with here and there a silence, ran
 By sallowy rims, arose the labourers' homes,
 A frequent haunt of Edith, on low knolls
 That dimpling died into each other, huts

At random scatter'd, each a nest in bloom.
Her art, her hand, her counsel all had wrought
About them: here was one that, summer-blanch'd,
Was parcel-bearded with the traveller's-joy
In Autumn, parcel ivy-clad; and here
The warm-blue breathings of a hidden hearth
Broke from a bower of vine and honeysuckle:
One look'd all rose-tree, and another wore
A close-set robe of jasmine sown with stars:
This had a rosy sea of gillyflowers
About it; this, a milky-way on earth,
Like visions in the Northern dreamer's heavens,
A lily-avenue climbing to the doors;
One, almost to the martin-haunted eaves
A summer burial deep in hollyhocks;
Each, its own charm; and Edith's everywhere;
And Edith ever visitant with him,
He but less loved than Edith, of her poor;
For she—so lowly-lovely and so loving,
Queenly responsive when the loyal hand
Rose from the clay it work'd in as she past,
Not sowing hedgerow texts and passing by,
Nor dealing goodly counsel from a height
That makes the lowest hate it, but a voice
Of comfort and an open hand of help,
A splendid presence flattering the poor roofs
Revered as theirs, but kindlier than themselves
To ailing wife or wailing infancy
Or old bedridden palsy—was adored;
He, loved for her and for himself. A grasp
Having the warmth and muscle of the heart,
A childly way with children, and a laugh
Ringing like proven golden coinage true,
Were no false passport to that easy realm,
Where once with Leolin at her side the girl,
Nursing a child, and turning to the warmth
The tender pink five-beaded baby-soles,
Heard the good mother softly whisper, “ Bless,
God bless 'em: marriages are made in Heaven.”

A flash of semi-jealousy clear'd it to her.

My lady's Indian kinsman unannounced
With half a score of swarthy faces came.
His own, tho' keen and bold and soldierly,
Sear'd by the close ecliptic, was not fair;
Fairer his talk, a tongue that ruled the hour,
Tho' seeming boastful: so when first he dash'd
Into the chronicle of a deedful day,
Sir Aylmer half forgot his lazy smile
Of patron, "Good! my lady's kinsman! good!"
My lady with her fingers interlock'd,
And rotatory thumbs on silken knees,
Call'd all her vital spirits into each ear
To listen: unawares they flitted off,
Busying themselves about the flowerage
That stood from out a stiff brocade in which,
The meteor of a splendid season, she,
Once with this kinsman, ah so long ago,
Stept thro' the stately minuet of those days:
But Edith's eager fancy hurried with him
Snatch'd thro' the perilous passes of his life:
Till Leolin ever watchful of her eye
Hated him with a momentary hate.
Wife-hunting, as the rumour ran, was he:
I know not, for he spoke not, only shower'd
His oriental gifts on every one
And most on Edith: like a storm he came,
And shook the house, and like a storm he went.

Among the gifts he left her (possibly
He flow'd and ebb'd uncertain, to return
When others had been tested) there was one,
A dagger, in rich sheath with jewels on it
Sprinkled about in gold that branch'd itself
Fine as ice-ferns on January panes
Made by a breath. I know not whence at first,
Nor of what race, the work; but as he told
The story, storming a hill-fort of thieves
He got it; for their captain after fight,
His comrades having fought their last below,
Was climbing up the valley; at whom he shot:
Down from the beetling crag to which he clung

Tumbled the tawny rascal at his feet,
 This dagger with him, which when now admired
 By Edith whom his pleasure was to please,
 At once the costly Sahib yielded to her.

And Leolin, coming after he was gone,
 Tost over all her presents petulantly:
 And when she show'd the wealthy scabbard, saying,
 "Look what a lovely piece of workmanship!"
 Slight was his answer, "Well—I care not for it:"
 Then playing with the blade he prick'd his hand,
 "A gracious gift to give a lady, this!"
 "But would it be more gracious," ask'd the girl,
 "Were I to give this gift of his to one
 That is no lady?" "Gracious? No," said he.
 "Me?—but I cared not for it. O pardon me,
 I seem to be ungraciousness itself."
 "Take it," she added sweetly, "tho' his gift;
 For I am more ungracious ev'n than you,
 I care not for it either;" and he said,
 "Why then I love it:" but Sir Aylmer past,
 And neither loved nor liked the thing he heard.

The next day came a neighbour. Blues and reds
 They talk'd of: blues were sure of it, he thought:
 Then of the latest fox—where started—kill'd
 In such a bottom: "Peter had the brush,
 My Peter, first:" and did Sir Aylmer know
 That great pock-pitten fellow had been caught?
 Then made his pleasure echo, hand to hand,
 And rolling as it were the substance of it
 Between his palms a moment up and down—
 "The birds were warm, the birds were warm upon him;
 We have him now:" and had Sir Aylmer heard—
 Nay, but he must—the land was ringing of it—
 This blacksmith-border marriage—one they knew—
 Raw from the nursery—who could trust a child?
 That cursed France with her equalities!
 And did Sir Aylmer (deferentially
 With nearing chair and lower'd accent) think—
 For people talk'd—that it was wholly wise

To let that handsome fellow Averill walk
 So freely with his daughter? people talk'd—
 The boy might get a notion into him;
 The girl might be entangled ere she knew.
 Sir Aylmer Aylmer slowly stiffening spoke:
 “The girl and boy, Sir, know their differences!”
 “Good,” said his friend, “but watch!” and he, “enough,
 More than enough, Sir! I can guard my own.”
 They parted, and Sir Aylmer Aylmer watch'd.

Pale, for on her the thunders of the house
 Had fallen first, was Edith that same night;
 Pale as the Jephtha's daughter, a rough piece
 Of early rigid colour, under which
 Withdrawing by the counter door to that
 Which Leolin open'd, she cast back upon him
 A piteous glance, and vanish'd. He, as one
 Caught in a burst of unexpected storm,
 And pelted with outrageous epithets,
 Turning beheld the Powers of the House
 On either side the hearth, indignant; her,
 Cooling her false cheek with a featherfan,
 Him glaring, by his own stale devil spurr'd,
 And, like a beast hard-ridden, breathing hard.
 “Ungenerous, dishonourable, base,
 Presumptuous! trusted as he was with her,
 The sole succeeder to their wealth, their lands,
 The last remaining pillar of their house,
 The one transmitter of their ancient name,
 Their child.” “Our child!” “Our heiress!” “Ours!”
 for still,
 Like echoes from beyond a hollow, came
 Her sicklier iteration. Last he said,
 “Boy, mark me! for your fortunes are to make.
 I swear you shall not make them out of mine.
 Now inasmuch as you have practised on her,
 Perplext her, made her half forget herself,
 Swerve from her duty to herself and us—
 Things in an Aylmer deem'd impossible,
 Far as we track ourselves—I say that this—
 Else I withdraw favour and countenance

From you and yours for ever—shall you do.
Sir, when you see her—but you shall not see her—
No, you shall write, and not to her, but me:
And you shall say that having spoken with me,
And after look'd into yourself, you find
That you meant nothing—as indeed you know
That you meant nothing. Such a match as this!
Impossible, prodigious!" These were words,
As meted by his measure of himself,
Arguing boundless forbearance: after which,
And Leolin's horror-stricken answer, "I
So foul a traitor to myself and her,
Never, oh never," for about as long
As the wind-hover hangs in balance, paused
Sir Aylmer reddening from the storm within,
Then broke all bonds of courtesy, and crying,
"Boy, should I find you by my doors again,
My men shall lash you from them like a dog;
Hence!" with a sudden execration drove
The footstool from before him, and arose;
So, stammering "scoundrel" out of teeth that ground
As in a dreadful dream, while Leolin still
Retreated half-aghost, the fierce old man
Follow'd, and under his own lintel stood
Storming with lifted hands, a hoary face
Meet for the reverence of the hearth, but now,
Beneath a pale and unimpassion'd moon,
Vext with unworthy madness, and deform'd.

Slowly and conscious of the rageful eye
That watch'd him, till he heard the ponderous door
Close, crashing with long echoes thro' the land,
Went Leolin; then, his passions all in flood
And masters of his motion, furiously
Down thro' the bright lawns to his brother's ran,
And foam'd away his heart at Averill's ear:
Whom Averill solaced as he might, amazed:
The man was his, had been his father's, friend:
He must have seen, himself had seen it long;
He must have known, himself had known: besides,
He never yet had set his daughter forth

Here in the woman-markets of the west,
 Where our Caucasians let themselves be sold.
 Some one, he thought, had slander'd Leolin to him.
 "Brother, for I have loved you more as son
 Than brother, let me tell you: I myself—
 What is their pretty saying? jilted, is it?
 Jilted I was: I say it for your peace.
 Pain'd, and, as bearing in myself the shame
 The woman should have borne, humiliated,
 I lived for years a stunted sunless life;
 Till after our good parents past away
 Watching your growth, I seem'd again to grow.
 Leolin, I almost sin in envying you:
 The very whitest lamb in all my fold
 Loves you: I know her: the worst thought she has
 Is whiter even than her pretty hand:
 She must prove true: for, brother, where two fight
 The strongest wins, and truth and love are strength,
 And you are happy: let her parents be."

But Leolin cried out the more upon them—
 Insolent, brainless, heartless! heiress, wealth,
 Their wealth, their heiress! wealth enough was theirs
 For twenty matches. Were he lord of this,
 Why twenty boys and girls should marry on it,
 And forty blest ones bless him, and himself
 Be wealthy still, ay wealthier. He believed
 This filthy marriage-hindering Mammon made
 The harlot of the cities: nature crost
 Was mother of the foul adulteries
 That saturate soul with body. Name, too! name,
 Their ancient name! they *might* be proud; its worth
 Was being Edith's. Ah how pale she had look'd
 Darling, to-night! they must have rated her
 Beyond all tolerance. These old pheasant-lords,
 These partridge-breeders of a thousand years,
 Who had mildew'd in their thousands, doing nothing
 Since Egbert—why, the greater their disgrace!
 Fall back upon a name! rest, rot in that!
 Not *keep* it noble, make it nobler? fools,
 With such a vantage-ground for nobleness

He had known a man, a quintessence of man,
The life of all—who madly loved—and he,
Thwarted by one of these old father-fools,
Had rioted his life out, and made an end.
He would not do it! her sweet face and faith
Held him from that: but he had powers, he knew it:
Back would he to his studies, make a name,
Name, fortune too: the world should ring of him
To shame these mouldy Aylmers in their graves:
Chancellor, or what is greatest would he be—
“ O brother, I am grieved to learn your grief—
Give me my fling, and let me say my say.”

At which, like one that sees his own excess,
And easily forgives it as his own,
He laugh'd; and then was mute; but presently
Wept like a storm: and honest Averill seeing
How low his brother's mood had fallen, fetch'd
His richest beeswing from a binn reserved
For banquets, praised the waning red, and told
The vintage—when *this* Aylmer came of age—
Then drank and past it; till at length the two,
Tho' Leolin flamed and fell again, agreed
That much allowance must be made for men.
After an angry dream this kindlier glow
Faded with morning, but his purpose held.

Yet once by night again the lovers met,
A perilous meeting under the tall pines
That darken'd all the northward of her Hall.
Him, to her meek and modest bosom prest
In agony, she promised that no force,
Persuasion, no, nor death could alter her:
He, passionately hopefuller, would go,
Labour for his own Edith, and return
In such a sunlight of prosperity
He should not be rejected. “ Write to me!
They loved me, and because I love their child
They hate me: there is war between us, dear,
Which breaks all bonds but ours; we must remain
Sacred to one another.” So they talk'd,

Poor children, for their comfort: the wind blew;
The rain of heaven, and their own bitter tears,
Tears, and the careless rain of heaven, mixt
Upon their faces, as they kiss'd each other
In darkness, and above them roar'd the pine.

So Leolin went; and as we task ourselves
To learn a language known but smatteringly
In phrases here and there at random, toil'd
Mastering the lawless science of our law,
That codeless myriad of precedent,
That wilderness of single instances,
Thro' which a few, by wit or fortune led,
May beat a pathway out to wealth and fame.
The jests, that flash'd about the pleader's room,
Lightning of the hour, the pun, the scurrilous tale—
Old scandals buried now seven decades deep
In other scandals that have lived and died,
And left the living scandal that shall die—
Were dead to him already; bent as he was
To make disproof of scorn, and strong in hopes,
And prodigal of all brain-labour he,
Charier of sleep, and wine, and exercise,
Except when for a breathing-while at eve,
Some niggard fraction of an hour, he ran
Beside the river-bank: and then indeed
Harder the times were, and the hands of power
Were bloodier, and the according hearts of men
Seem'd harder too; but the soft river-breeze,
Which fann'd the gardens of that rival rose
Yet fragrant in a heart remembering
His former talks with Edith, on him breathed
Far purelier in his rushings to and fro,
After his books, to flush his blood with air,
Then to his books again. My lady's cousin,
Half-sickening of his pension'd afternoon,
Drove in upon the student once or twice,
Ran a Malayan muck against the times,
Had golden hopes for France and all mankind,
Answer'd all queries touching those at home
With a heaved shoulder and a saucy smile,

And fain had haled him out into the world,
And air'd him there: his nearer friend would say,
" Screw not the chord too sharply lest it snap."
Then left alone he pluck'd her dagger forth
From where his worldless heart had kept it warm,
Kissing his vows upon it like a knight.
And wrinkled benchers often talk'd of him
Approvingly, and prophesied his rise:
For heart, I think, help'd head: her letters too,
Tho' far between, and coming fitfully
Like broken music, written as she found
Or made occasion, being strictly watch'd,
Charm'd him thro' every labyrinth till he saw
An end, a hope, a light breaking upon him.

But they that cast her spirit into flesh,
Her worldly-wise begetters, plagued themselves
To sell her, those good parents, for her good.
Whatever eldest-born of rank or wealth
Might lie within their compass, him they lured
Into their net made pleasant by the baits
Of gold and beauty, wooing him to woo.
So month by month the noise about their doors,
And distant blaze of those dull banquets, made
The nightly wirer of their innocent hare
Falter before he took it. All in vain.
Sullen, defiant, pitying, wroth, return'd
Leolin's rejected rivals from their suit
So often, that the folly taking wings
Slipt o'er those lazy limits down the wind
With rumour, and became in other fields
A mockery to the yeomen over ale,
And laughter to their lords: but those at home,
As hunters round a hunted creature draw
The cordon close and closer toward the death,
Narrow'd her goings out and comings in;
Forbad her first the house of Averill,
Then closed her access to the wealthier farms,
Last from her own home-circle of the poor
They barr'd her: yet she bore it: yet her cheek
Kept colour: wondrous! but, O mystery!

What amulet drew her down to that old oak,
So old, that twenty years before, a part
Falling had let appear the brand of John—
Once grovelike, each huge arm a tree, but now
The broken base of a black tower, a cave
Of touchwood, with a single flourishing spray.
There the manorial lord too curiously
Raking in that millennial touchwood-dust
Found for himself a bitter treasure-trove;
Burst his own wyvern on the seal, and read
Writhing a letter from his child, for which
Came at the moment Leolin's emissary,
A crippled lad, and coming turn'd to fly,
But scared with threats of jail and halter gave
To him that fluster'd his poor parish wits
The letter which he brought, and swore besides
To play their go-between as heretofore
Nor let them know themselves betray'd; and then,
Soul-stricken at their kindness to him, went
Hating his own lean heart and miserable.

Thenceforward oft from out a despot dream
The father panting woke, and oft, as dawn
Aroused the black republic on his elms,
Sweeping the frothfly from the fescue brush'd
Thro' the dim meadow toward his treasure-trove,
Seized it, took home, and to my lady,—who made
A downward crescent of her minion mouth,
Listless in all despondence—read; and tore,
As if the living passion symbol'd there
Were living nerves to feel the rent; and burnt,
Now chafing at his own great self defied,
Now striking on huge stumbling-blocks of scorn
In babyisms, and dear diminutives
Scatter'd all over the vocabulary
Of such a love as like a chidden child,
After much wailing, hush'd itself at last
Hopeless of answer: then tho' Averill wrote
And bad him with good heart sustain himself—
All would be well—the lover heeded not,
But passionately restless came and went,

And rustling once at night about the place,
There by a keeper shot at, slightly hurt,
Raging return'd: nor was it well for her
Kept to the garden now, and grove of pines,
Watch'd even there; and one was set to watch
The watcher, and Sir Aylmer watch'd them all,
Yet bitterer from his readings: once indeed,
Warm'd with his wines, or taking pride in her,
She look'd so sweet, he kiss'd her tenderly
Not knowing what possess'd him: that one kiss
Was Leolin's one strong rival upon earth;
Seconded, for my lady follow'd suit,
Seem'd hope's returning rose: and then ensued
A Martin's summer of his faded love,
Or ordeal by kindness; after this
He seldom crost his child without a sneer;
The mother flow'd in shallower acrimonies:
Never one kindly smile, one kindly word:
So that the gentle creature shut from all
Her charitable use, and face to face
With twenty months of silence, slowly lost
Nor greatly cared to lose, her hold on life.
Last, some low fever ranging round to spy
The weakness of a people or a house,
Like flies that haunt a wound, or deer, or men,
Or almost all that is, hurting the hurt—
Save Christ as we believe him—found the girl
And flung her down upon a couch of fire,
Where careless of the household faces near,
And crying upon the name of Leolin,
She, and with her the race of Aylmer, past.

Star to star vibrates light: may soul to soul
Strike thro' a finer element of her own?
So,—from afar,—touch as at once? or why
That night, that moment, when she named his name,
Did the keen shriek, “Yes love, yes Edith, yes,”
Shrill, till the comrade of his chambers woke,
And came upon him half-arisen from sleep,
With a weird bright eye, sweating and trembling,
His hair as it were crackling into flames,

His body half flung forward in pursuit,
And his long arms stretch'd as to grasp a flyer:
Nor knew he wherefore he had made the cry;
And being much befool'd and idiotized
By the rough amity of the other, sank
As into sleep again. The second day,
My lady's Indian kinsman rushing in,
A breaker of the bitter news from home,
Found a dead man, a letter edged with death
Beside him, and the dagger which himself
Gave Edith, redden'd with no bandit's blood:
"From Edith" was engraven on the blade.

Then Averill went and gazed upon his death.
And when he came again, his flock believed—
Beholding how the years which are not Time's
Had blasted him—that many thousand days
Were clipt by horror from his term of life.
Yet the sad mother, for the second death
Scarce touch'd her thro' that nearness of the first,
And being used to find her pastor texts,
Sent to the harrow'd brother, praying him
To speak before the people of her child,
And fixt the Sabbath. Darkly that day rose:
Autumn's mock sunshine of the faded woods
Was all the life of it; for hard on these,
A breathless burthen of low-folded heavens
Stifled and chill'd at once: but every roof
Sent out a listener: many too had known
Edith among the hamlets round, and since
The parents' harshness and the hapless loves
And double death were widely murmur'd, left
Their own gray tower, or plain-faced tabernacle,
To hear him; all in mourning these, and those
With blots of it about them, ribbon, glove,
Or kerchief; while the church,—one night, except
For greenish glimmerings thro' the lancets,—made
Still paler the pale head of him, who tower'd
Above them, with his hopes in either grave.

Long o'er his bent brows linger'd Averill,

His face magnetic to the hand from which
Livid he pluck'd it forth, and labour'd thro'
His brief prayer-prelude, gave the verse, " Behold,
Your house is left unto you desolate!"
But lapsed into so long a pause again
As half amazed half frightened all his flock:
Then from his height and loneliness of grief
Bore down in flood, and dash'd his angry heart
Against the desolations of the world.

Never since our bad earth became one sea,
Which rolling o'er the palaces of the proud,
And all but those who knew the living God—
Eight that were left to make a purer world—
When since had flood, fire, earthquake, thunder, wrought
Such waste and havoc as the idolatries,
Which from the low light of mortality
Shot up their shadows to the Heaven of Heavens,
And worshipt their own darkness as the Highest?
" Gash thyself, priest, and honour thy brute Baäl,
And to thy worst self sacrifice thyself,
For with thy worst self hast thou clothed thy God.
Then came a Lord in no wise like to Baäl.
The babe shall lead the lion. Surely now
The wilderness shall blossom as the rose.
Crown thyself, worm, and worship thine own lusts!—
No coarse and blockish God of acreage
Stands at thy gate for thee to grovel to—
Thy God is far diffused in noble groves
And princely halls, and farms, and flowing lawns,
And heaps of living gold that daily grow,
And title-scrolls and gorgeous heraldries.
In such a shape dost thou behold thy God.
Thou wilt not gash thy flesh for *him*; for thine
Fares richly, in fine linen, not a hair
Ruffled upon the scarf-skin, even while
The deathless ruler of thy dying house
Is wounded to the death that cannot die;
And tho' thou numberest with the followers
Of One who cried, " Leave all and follow me."
Thee therefore with His light about thy feet,

Thee with His message ringing in thine ears,
Thee shall thy brother man, the Lord from Heaven,
Born of a village girl, carpenter's son,
Wonderful, Prince of peace, the Mighty God,
Count the more base idolater of the two;
Crueller: as not passing thro' the fire
Bodies, but souls—thy children's—thro' the smoke,
The blight of low desires—darkening thine own
To thine own likeness; or if one of these,
Thy better born unhappily from thee,
Should, as by miracle, grow straight and fair—
Friends, I was bid to speak of such a one
By those who most have cause to sorrow for her—
Fairer than Rachel by the palmy well,
Fairer than Ruth among the fields of corn,
Fair as the Angel that said " hail " she seem'd,
Who entering fill'd the house with sudden light.
For so mine own was brighten'd: where indeed
The roof so lowly but that beam of Heaven
Dawn'd sometime thro' the doorway? whose the babe
Too ragged to be fondled on her lap,
Warm'd at her bosom? The poor child of shame,
The common care whom no one cared for, leapt
To greet her, wasting his forgotten heart,
As with the mother he had never known,
In gambols; for her fresh and innocent eyes
Had such a star of morning in their blue,
That all neglected places of the field
Broke into nature's music when they saw her.
Low was her voice, but won mysterious way
Thro' the seal'd ear to which a louder one
Was all but silence—free of alms her hand—
The hand that robed your cottage-walls with flowers
Has often toil'd to clothe your little ones;
How often placed upon the sick man's brow
Cool'd it, or laid his feverous pillow smooth!
Had you one sorrow and she shared it not?
One burthen and she would not lighten it?
One spiritual doubt she did not soothe?
Or when some heat of difference sparkled out,
How sweetly would she glide between your wraths,

And steal you from each other! for she walk'd
Wearing the light yoke of that Lord of love,
Who still'd the rolling wave of Galilee!
And one—of him I was not bid to speak—
Was always with her, whom you also knew.
Him too you loved, for he was worthy love.
And these had been together from the first;
They might have been together till the last.
Friends, this frail bark of ours, when sorely tried,
May wreck itself without the pilot's guilt,
Without the captain's knowledge: hope with me.
Whose shame is that, if he went hence with shame?
Nor mine the fault, if losing both of these
I cry to vacant chairs and widow'd walls,
‘ My house is left unto me desolate.’ ”

While thus he spoke, his hearers wept; but some,
Sons of the glebe, with other frowns than those
That knit themselves for summer shadow, scowl'd
At their great lord. He, when it seem'd he saw
No pale sheet-lightnings from afar, but fork'd
Of the near storm, and aiming at his head,
Sat anger-charm'd from sorrow, soldierlike,
Erect: but when the preacher's cadence flow'd
Softening thro' all the gentle attributes
Of his lost child, the wife, who watch'd his face,
Paled at a sudden twitch of his iron mouth;
And “ O pray God that he hold up,” she thought,
“ Or surely I shall shame myself and him.”

“ Nor yours the blame—for who beside your hearths
Can take her place—if echoing me you cry,
‘ Our house is left unto us desolate?’
But thou, O thou that killest, had'st thou known,
O thou that stonest, had'st thou understood
The things belonging to thy peace and ours!
Is there no prophet but the voice that calls
Doom upon kings, or in the waste, ‘ Repent?’
Is not our own child on the narrow way,
Who down to those that saunter in the broad
Cries ‘ Come up hither,’ as a prophet to us?

Is there no stoning save with flint and rock?
Yes, as the dead we weep for testify—
No desolation but by sword and fire?
Yes, as your moanings witness, and myself
Am lonelier, darker, earthlier for my loss.
Give me your prayers, for he is past your prayers,
Not past the living fount of pity in Heaven.
But I that thought myself long-suffering, meek,
Exceeding 'poor in spirit'—how the words
Have twisted back upon themselves, and mean
Vileness, we are grown so proud—I wish'd my voice
A rushing tempest of the wrath of God
To blow these sacrifices thro' the world—
Sent like the twelve-divided concubine
To inflame the tribes: but there—out yonder—earth
Lightens from her own central Hell—O there
The red fruit of an old idolatry—
The heads of chiefs and princes fall so fast,
They cling together in the ghastly sack—
The land all shambles—naked marriages
Flash from the bridge, and ever-murder'd France,
By shores that darken with the gathering wolf,
Runs in a river of blood to the sick sea.
Is this a time to madden madness then?
Was this a time for these to flaunt their pride?
May Pharaoh's darkness, folds as dense as those
Which hid the Holiest from the people's eyes
Ere the great death, shroud this great sin from all?
Doubtless our narrow world must canvass it:
O rather pray for those and pity them,
Who thro' their own desire accomplish'd bring
Their own gray hairs with sorrow to the grave—
Who broke the bond which they desired to break,
Which else had link'd their race with times to come—
Who wove coarse webs to snare her purity,
Grossly contriving their dear daughter's good—
Poor souls, and knew not what they did, but sat
Ignorant, devising their own daughter's death!
May not that earthly chastisement suffice?
Have not our love and reverence left them bare?
Will not another take their heritage?

Will there be children's laughter in their hall
For ever and for ever, or one stone
Left on another, or is it a light thing
That I their guest, their host, their ancient friend,
I made by these the last of all my race
Must cry to these the last of theirs, as cried
Christ ere His agony to those that swore
Not by the temple but the gold, and made
Their own traditions God, and slew the Lord,
And left their memories a world's curse—' Behold,
Your house is left unto you desolate? ' "

Ended he had not, but she brook'd no more:
Long since her heart had beat remorselessly,
Her cramp't-up sorrow pain'd her, and a sense
Of meanness in her unresisting life.
Then their eyes vext her; for on entering
He had cast the curtains of their seat aside—
Black velvet of the costliest—she herself
Had seen to that: fain had she closed them now,
Yet dared not stir to do it, only near'd
Her husband inch by inch, but when she laid,
Wifelike, her hand in one of his, he veil'd
His face with the other, and at once, as falls
A creeper when the prop is broken, fell
The woman shrieking at his feet, and swoon'd.
Then her own people bore along the nave
Her pendent hands, and narrow meagre face
Seam'd with the shallow cares of fifty years:
And her the Lord of all the landscape round
Ev'n to its last horizon, and of all
Who peer'd at him so keenly, follow'd out
Tall and erect, but in the middle aisle
Reel'd, as a footsore ox in crowded ways
Stumbling across the market to his death,
Unpitied; for he groped as blind, and seem'd
Always about to fall, grasping the pews
And oaken finials till he touch'd the door;
Yet to the lychgate, where his chariot stood,
Strode from the porch, tall and erect again.

But nevermore did either pass the gate
Save under pall with bearers. In one month,
Thro' weary and yet ever wearier hours,
The childless mother went to seek her child;
And when he felt the silence of his house
About him, and the change and not the change,
And those fixt eyes of painted ancestors
Staring for ever from their gilded walls
On him their last descendant, his own head
Began to droop, to fall; the man became
Imbecile; his one word was "desolate;"
Dead for two years before his death was he;
But when the second Christmas came, escaped
His keepers, and the silence which he felt,
To find a deeper in the narrow gloom
By wife and child; nor wanted at his end
The dark retinue reverencing death
At golden thresholds; nor from tender hearts,
And those who sorrow'd o'er a vanish'd race,
Pity, the violet on the tyrant's grave.
Then the great Hall was wholly broken down,
And the broad woodland parcell'd into farms;
And where the two contrived their daughter's good,
Lies the hawk's cast, the mole has made his run,
The hedgehog underneath the plantain bores,
The rabbit fondles his own harmless face,
The slow-worm creeps, and the thin weasel there
Follows the mouse, and all is open field.

SEA DREAMS

A CITY clerk, but gently born and bred;
His wife, an unknown artist's orphan child—
One babe was theirs, a Margaret, three years old:
They, thinking that her clear germander eye
Droopt in the giant-factoried city-gloom,
Came, with a month's leave given them, to the sea:
For which his gains were dock'd, however small:
Small were his gains, and hard his work; besides,
Their slender household fortunes (for the man
Had risk'd his little), like the little thrift,
Trembled in perilous places o'er a deep:
And oft, when sitting all alone, his face
Would darken, as he cursed his credulousness,
And that one unctuous mouth which lured him, rogue,
To buy strange shares in some Peruvian mine.
Now seaward-bound for health they gain'd a coast,
All sand and cliff and deep-inrunning cave,
At close of day; slept, woke, and went the next,
The Sabbath, pious variers from the church,
To chapel; where a heated pulpитеer,
Not preaching simple Christ to simple men,
Announced the coming doom, and fulminated
Against the scarlet woman and her creed:
For sideways up he swung his arms, and shriek'd,
“ Thus, thus with violence,” ev'n as if he held
The Apocalyptic millstone, and himself
Were that great Angel; “ Thus with violence
Shall Babylon be cast into the sea;
Then comes the close.” The gentle-hearted wife
Sat shuddering at the ruin of a world;
He at his own: but when the wordy storm
Had ended, forth they came and paced the shore,
Ran in and out the long sea-framing caves,
Drank the large air, and saw, but scarce believed
(The sootflake of so many a summer still

Clung to their fancies) that they saw, the sea.
 So now on sand they walk'd, and now on cliff,
 Lingering about the thymy promontories,
 Till all the sails were darken'd in the west,
 And rosed in the east: then homeward and to bed:
 Where she, who kept a tender Christian hope
 Haunting a holy text, and still to that
 Returning, as the bird returns, at night,
 " Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,"
 Said, " Love, forgive him: " but he did not speak;
 And silenced by that silence lay the wife,
 Remembering her dear Lord who died for all,
 And musing on the little lives of men,
 And how they mar this little by their feuds.

But while the two were sleeping, a full tide
 Rose with ground-swell, which, on the foremost rocks
 Touching, upjetted in spirits of wild sea-smoke,
 And scaled in sheets of wasteful foam, and fell
 In vast sea-cataracts—ever and anon
 Dead claps of thunder from within the cliffs
 Heard thro' the living roar. At this the babe,
 Their Margaret cradled near them, wail'd and woke
 The mother, and the father suddenly cried,
 " A wreck, a wreck! " then turn'd, and groaning said,

" Forgive! How many will say, ' forgive,' and find
 A sort of absolution in the sound
 To hate a little longer! No; the sin
 That neither God nor man can well forgive,
 Hypocrisy, I saw it in him at once.
 Is it so true that second thoughts are best?
 Not first, and third, which are a riper first?
 Too ripe, too late! they come too late for use.
 Ah love, there surely lives in man and beast
 Something divine to warn them of their foes:
 And such a sense, when first I fronted him,
 Said, ' trust him not; ' but after, when I came
 To know him more, I lost it, knew him less;
 Fought with what seem'd my own uncharity;
 Sat at his table; drank his costly wines;

Made more and more allowance for his talk;
Went further, fool! and trusted him with all,
All my poor scrapings from a dozen years
Of dust and deskwork: there is no such mine,
None; but a gulf of ruin, swallowing gold,
Not making. Ruin'd! ruin'd! the sea roars
Ruin: a fearful night!"

"Not fearful; fair,"
Said the good wife, "if every star in heaven
Can make it fair: you do but hear the tide.
Had you ill dreams?"

"O yes," he said, "I dream'd
Of such a tide swelling toward the land,
And I from out the boundless outer deep
Swept with it to the shore, and enter'd one
Of those dark caves that run beneath the cliffs.
I thought the motion of the boundless deep
Bore through the cave, and I was heaved upon it
In darkness: then I saw one lovely star
Larger and larger. 'What a world,' I thought,
'To live in!' but in moving on I found
Only the landward exit of the cave,
Bright with the sun upon the stream beyond:
And near the light a giant woman sat,
All over earthy, like a piece of earth,
A pickaxe in her hand: then out I slipt
Into a land all sun and blossom, trees
As high as heaven, and every bird that sings:
And here the night-light flickering in my eyes
Awoke me."

"That was then your dream," she said,
"Not sad, but sweet."

"So sweet, I lay," said he,
"And mused upon it, drifting up the stream
In fancy, till I slept again, and pieced
The broken vision; for I dream'd that still
The motion of the great deep bore me on,

And that the woman walk'd upon the brink:
 I wonder'd at her strength, and ask'd her of it:
 ' It came,' she said, ' by working in the mines:'
 O then to ask her of my shares, I thought;
 And ask'd; but not a word; she shook her head.
 And then the motion of the current ceased,
 And there was rolling thunder; and we reach'd
 A mountain, like a wall of burs and thorns;
 But she with her strong feet up the steep hill
 Trod out a path: I follow'd; and at top
 She pointed seaward: there a fleet of glass,
 That seem'd a fleet of jewels under me,
 Sailing along before a gloomy cloud
 That not one moment ceased to thunder, past
 In sunshine: right across its track there lay,
 Down in the water, a long reef of gold,
 Or what seem'd gold: and I was glad at first
 To think that in our often-ransack'd world
 Still so much gold was left; and then I fear'd
 Lest the gay navy there should splinter on it,
 And fearing waved my arm to warn them off;
 An idle signal, for the brittle fleet
 (I thought I could have died to save it) near'd,
 Touch'd, clink'd, and clash'd, and vanish'd, and I woke,
 I heard the clash so clearly. Now I see
 My dream was Life; the woman honest Work;
 And my poor venture but a fleet of glass
 Wreck'd on a reef of visionary gold."

" Nay," said the kindly wife to comfort him,
 " You raised your arm, you tumbled down and broke
 The glass with little Margaret's medicine in it;
 And, breaking that, you made and broke your dream;
 A trifle makes a dream, a trifle breaks."

" No trifle," groan'd the husband; " yesterday
 I met him suddenly in the street, and ask'd
 That which I ask'd the woman in my dream.
 Like her, he shook his head. ' Show me the books! '
 He dodged me with a long and loose account.
 ' The books, the books!' but he, he could not wait,

Bound on a matter he of life and death:
When the great Books (see Daniel seven and ten)
Were open'd, I should find he meant me well;
And then began to bloat himself, and ooze
All over with the fat affectionate smile
That makes the widow lean. ‘ My dearest friend,
Have faith, have faith! We live by faith,’ said he;
‘ And all things work together for the good
Of those’—it makes me sick to quote him—last
Gript my hand hard, and with God-bless-you went.
I stood like one that had received a blow:
I found a hard friend in his loose accounts,
A loose one in the hard grip of his hand,
A curse in his God-bless-you: then my eyes
Pursued him down the street, and far away,
Among the honest shoulders of the crowd,
Read rascal in the motions of his back,
And scoundrel in the supple-sliding knee.”

“ Was he so bound, poor soul? ” said the good wife;
“ So are we all: but do not call him, love,
Before you prove him, rogue, and proved, forgive.
His gain is loss; for he that wrongs his friend
Wrongs himself more, and ever bears about
A silent court of justice in his breast,
Himself the judge and jury, and himself
The prisoner at the bar, ever condemn’d:
And that drags down his life: then comes what comes
Hereafter: and he meant, he said he meant,
Perhaps he meant, or partly meant, you well.”

“ With all his conscience and one eye askew”—
Love, let me quote these lines, that you may learn
A man is likewise counsel for himself,
Too often, in that silent court of yours—
‘ With all his conscience and one eye askew,
So false, he partly took himself for true;
Whose pious talk, when most his heart was dry,
Made wet with crafty crowsfoot round his eye;
Who, never naming God except for gain,
So never took that useful name in vain;

Made Him his catspaw and the Cross his tool,
 And Christ the bait to trap his dupe and fool;
 Nor deeds of gift, but gifts of grace he forged,
 And snakelike slimed his victim ere he gorged;
 And oft at Bible meetings, o'er the rest
 Arising, did his holy oily best,
 Dropping the too rough H in Hell and Heaven,
 To spread the Word by which himself had thriven.'
 How like you this old satire?"

"Nay," she said,
 "I loathe it: he had never kindly heart,
 Nor ever cared to better his own kind,
 Who first wrote satire, with no pity in it.
 But will you hear *my* dream, for I had one
 That altogether went to music? Still
 It awed me."

Then she told it, having dream'd
 Of that same coast.

—But round the North, a light,
 A belt, it seem'd, of luminous vapour, lay,
 And ever in it a low musical note
 Swell'd up and died; and, as it swell'd, a ridge
 Of breaker issued from the belt, and still
 Grew with the growing note, and when the note
 Had reach'd a thunderous fullness, on those cliffs
 Broke, mixt with awful light (the same as that
 Living within the belt) whereby she saw
 That all those lines of cliffs were cliffs no more,
 But huge cathedral fronts of every age,
 Grave, florid, stern, as far as eye could see,
 One after one: and then the great ridge drew,
 Lessening to the lessening music, back,
 And past into the belt and swell'd again
 Slowly to music: ever when it broke
 The statues, king or saint, or founder fell;
 Then from the gaps and chasms of ruin left
 Came men and women in dark clusters round,
 Some crying, 'Set them up! they shall not fall!'

And others, ‘ Let them lie, for they have fall’n.’
And still they strove and wrangled: and she grieved
In her strange dream, she knew not why, to find
Their wildest wailings never out of tune
With that sweet note; and ever as their shrieks
Ran highest up the gamut, that great wave
Returning, while none mark’d it, on the crowd
Broke, mixt with awful light, and show’d their eyes
Glaring, and passionate looks, and swept away
The men of flesh and blood, and men of stone,
To the waste deeps together.

“ Then I fixt

My wistful eyes on two fair images,
Both crown’d with stars and high among the stars,—
The Virgin Mother standing with her child
High up on one of those dark minster-fronts—
Till she began to totter, and the child
Clung to the mother, and sent out a cry
Which mixt with little Margaret’s, and I woke,
And my dream awed me:—well—but what are dreams?
Yours came but from the breaking of a glass,
And mine but from the crying of a child.”

“ Child? No!” said he, “ but this tide’s roar, and his,
Our Boanerges with his threats of doom,
And loud-lung’d Antibabylonianisms
(Altho’ I grant but little music there)
Went both to make your dream: but if there were
A music harmonising our wild cries,
Sphere-music such as that you dream’d about,
Why, that would make our passions far too like
The discords dear to the musician. No—
One shriek of hate would jar all the hymns of heaven:
True Devils with no ear, they howl in tune
With nothing but the Devil!”

“ ‘ True ’ indeed!

One of our town, but later by an hour
Here than ourselves, spoke with me on the shore;
While you were running down the sands, and made

The dimpled flounce of the sea-furbelow flap,
 Good man, to please the child. She brought strange news.
 Why were you silent when I spoke to-night?
 I had set my heart on your forgiving him
 Before you knew. We *must* forgive the dead."

"Dead! who is dead?"

"The man your eye pursued.
 A little after you had parted with him,
 He suddenly dropt dead of heart-disease."

"Dead? he? of heart-disease? what heart had he
 To die of? dead!"

"Ah, dearest, if there be
 A devil in man, there is an angel too,
 And if he did that wrong you charge him with,
 His angel broke his heart. But your rough voice
 (You spoke so loud) has roused the child again.
 Sleep, little birdie, sleep! will she not sleep
 Without her 'little birdie?' well then, sleep,
 And I will sing you 'birdie.'"

Saying this,
 The woman half turn'd round from him she loved,
 Left him one hand, and reaching thro' the night
 Her other, found (for it was close beside)
 And half embraced the basket cradle-head
 With one soft arm, which, like the pliant bough
 That moving moves the nest and nestling, sway'd
 The cradle, while she sang this baby song.

What does little birdie say
 In her nest at peep of day?
 Let me fly, says little birdie,
 Mother, let me fly away.
 Birdie, rest a little longer,
 Till the little wings are stronger.
 So she rests a little longer,
 Then she flies away.

What does little baby say,
In her bed at peep of day?
Baby says, like little birdie,
Let me rise and fly away.
Baby, sleep a little longer,
Till the little limbs are stronger.
If she sleeps a little longer,
Baby too shall fly away.

“ She sleeps: let us too, let all evil, sleep.
He also sleeps—another sleep than ours.
He can do no more wrong: forgive him, dear,
And I shall sleep the sounder! ”

Then the man,

“ His deeds yet live, the worst is yet to come.
Yet let your sleep for this one night be sound:
I do forgive him! ”

“ Thanks, my love,” she said,
“ Your own will be the sweeter,” and they slept.

THE GRANDMOTHER

I

AND Willy, my eldest-born, is gone, you say, little Anne?
Ruddy and white, and strong on his legs, he looks like a
man.

And Willy's wife has written: she never was over-wise,
Never the wife for Willy: he wouldn't take my advice.

II

For, Annie, you see, her father was not the man to save,
Hadn't a head to manage, and drank himself into his
grave.

Pretty enough, very pretty! but I was against it for one.
Eh!—but he wouldn't hear me—and Willy, you say, is
gone.

III

Willy, my beauty, my eldest-born, the flower of the
flock;

Never a man could fling him: for Willy stood like a rock.
“Here's a leg for a babe of a week!” says doctor; and he
would be bound,

There was not his like that year in twenty parishes round.

IV

Strong of his hands, and strong on his legs, but still of his
tongue!

I ought to have gone before him: I wonder he went so
young.

I cannot cry for him, Annie: I have not long to stay;
Perhaps I shall see him the sooner, for he lived far away.

v

Why do you look at me, Annie? you think I am hard and cold;

But all my children have gone before me, I am so old:
I cannot weep for Willy, nor can I weep for the rest;
Only at your age, Annie, I could have wept with the best.

vi

For I remember a quarrel I had with your father, my dear,
All for a slanderous story, that cost me many a tear.
I mean your grandfather, Annie: it cost me a world of woe,
Seventy years ago, my darling, seventy years ago.

vii

For Jenny, my cousin, had come to the place, and I knew
right well
That Jenny had tript in her time: I knew, but I would not
tell.
And she to be coming and slandering me, the base little
liar!
But the tongue is a fire as you know, my dear, the tongue
is a fire.

viii

And the parson made it his text that week, and he said
likewise,
That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies,
That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with
outright,
But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight.

ix

And Willy had not been down to the farm for a week and
a day;
And all things look'd half-dead, tho' it was the middle of
May.
Jenny, to slander me, who knew what Jenny had been!
But soiling another, Annie, will never make oneself clean.

X

And I cried myself well-nigh blind, and all of an evening late
I climb'd to the top of the garth, and stood by the road at
the gate.

The moon like a rick on fire was rising over the dale,
And whit, whit, whit, in the bush beside me chirrupt the
nightingale.

XI

All of a sudden he stopt: there past by the gate of the farm,
Willy—he didn't see me—and Jenny hung on his arm.
Out into the road I started, and spoke I scarce knew how;
Ah, there's no fool like the old one—it makes me angry now.

XII

Willy stood up like a man, and look'd the thing that he
meant;
Jenny, the viper, made me a mocking courtsey and went.
And I said, "Let us part: in a hundred years it'll all be the
same,
You cannot love me at all, if you love not my good name."

XIII

And he turn'd, and I saw his eyes all wet, in the sweet
moonshine:
"Sweetheart, I love you so well that your good name is
mine.
And what do I care for Jane, let her speak of you well or
ill;
But marry me out of hand: we two shall be happy still."

XIV

"Marry you, Willy!" said I, "but I needs must speak my
mind,
And I fear you'll listen to tales, be jealous and hard and
unkind."
But he turn'd and claspt me in his arms, and answer'd,
 "No, love, no;"
Seventy years ago, my darling, seventy years ago.

xv

So Willy and I were wedded: I wore a lilac gown;
And the ringers rang with a will, and he gave the ringers
a crown.

But the first that ever I bare was dead before he was born,
Shadow and shine is life, little Annie, flower and thorn.

xvi

That was the first time, too, that ever I thought of death.
There lay the sweet little body that never had drawn a
breath.

I had not wept, little Anne, not since I had been a wife;
But I wept like a child that day, for the babe had fought
for his life.

xvii

His dear little face was troubled, as if with anger or pain:
I look'd at the still little body—his trouble had all been in
vain.

For Willy I cannot weep, I shall see him another morn:
But I wept like a child for the child that was dead before he
was born.

xviii

But he cheer'd me, my good man, for he seldom said me nay:
Kind, like a man, was he; like a man, too, would have his
way:

Never jealous—not he: we had many a happy year;
And he died, and I could not weep—my own time seem'd so
near.

xix

But I wish'd it had been God's will that I, too, then could
have died:

I began to be tired a little, and fain had slept at his side.
And that was ten years back, or more, if I don't forget:
But as to the children, Annie, they're all about me yet.

xx

Pattering over the boards, my Annie who left me at two,
 Patter she goes, my own little Annie, an Annie like you:
 Pattering over the boards, she comes and goes at her will,
 While Hally is in the five-acre and Charlie ploughing the hill.

xxi

And Harry and Charlie, I hear them too—they sing to their
 team:

Often they come to the door in a pleasant kind of a dream.
 They come and sit by my chair, they hover about my bed—
 I am not always certain if they be alive or dead.

xxii

And yet I know for a truth, there's none of them left alive;
 For Harry went at sixty, your father at sixty-five:
 And Willy, my eldest born, at nigh threescore and ten;
 I knew them all as babies, and now they're elderly men.

xxiii

For mine is a time of peace, it is not often I grieve;
 I am oftener sitting at home in my father's farm at eve:
 And the neighbours come and laugh and gossip, and so do I;
 I find myself often laughing at things that have long gone by.

xxiv

To be sure the preacher says, our sins should make us sad:
 But mine is a time of peace, and there is Grace to be had;
 And God, not man, is the Judge of us all when life shall
 cease;

And in this Book, little Annie, the message is one of Peace.

xxv

And age is a time of peace, so it be free from pain,
 And happy has been my life; but I would not live it
 again.

I seem to be tired a little, that's all, and long for rest;
 Only at your age, Annie, I could have wept with the best.

xxvi

So Willy has gone, my beauty, my eldest-born, my flower;
But how can I weep for Willy, he has but gone for an hour,—
Gone for a minute, my son, from this room into the next;
I, too, shall go in a minute. What time have I to be vexed?

xxvii

And Willy's wife has written, she never was overwise.
Get me my glasses, Annie: thank God that I keep my eyes.
There is but a trifle left you, when I shall have past away.
But stay with the old woman now: you cannot have long
to stay.

NORTHERN FARMER

OLD STYLE

I

WHEER 'asta beän saw long and meä liggin' 'ere aloän?
Noorse? thoort nowt o' a noorse: whoy, Doctor's abeän an'
agoän:

Says that I moänt 'a naw moor yaäle: but I beänt a fool:
Git ma my yaäle, for I beänt a-gooin' to breäk my rule.

II

Doctors, they knaws nowt, for a says what's nawways true:
Naw soort o' koind o' use to saäy the things that a do.
I've 'ed my point o' yaäle ivry noight sin' I beän 'ere,
An' I've 'ed my quart ivry market-noight for foorty year.

III

Parson's a beän loikewoise, an' a sittin' 'ere o' my bed.
"The amoightly's a taäkin o' you to 'issén, my friend," a said,
An' a towd ma my sins, an's toithe were due, an' I gied it in
hond;
I done my duty by un, as I 'a done by the lond.

IV

Larn'd a ma' beä. I reckons I 'annot sa mooch to larn.
But a cost oop, thot a did, 'boot Bessy Marris's barn.
Thof a knaws I hallus voäted wi' Squoire an' choorch an'
staäte,
An' i' the woost o' toimes I wur niver agin the raäte.

V

An' I hallus comed to 's choorch afoor moy Sally wur deäd,
An' 'eerd un a bummin' awaäy loike a buzzard-clock¹ ower
my yeäd,

¹ Cockchafer.

An' I niver knew'd whot a meän'd but I thowt a 'ad summut
to saäy,
An I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said an' I comed awaäy.

VI

Bessy Marris's barn! tha knaws she laäid it to meä.
Mowt 'a beän, mayhap, for she wur a bad un, sheä.
'Siver, I kep un, I kep un, my lass, tha mun understand;
I done my duty by un as I 'a done by the lond.

VII

But Parson a comes an' a goos, an' a says it eäsy an' freeä,
"The amoightly's a taäkin o' you to 'issén, my friend,"
says 'ää.
I weänt saäy men be loiars, thof summun said it in 'ääste:
But a reäds wonn sarmin a weeäk, an' I 'a stubb'd Thornaby
waäste.

VIII

D'ya moind the waäste, my lass? naw, naw, tha was not
born then;
Theer wur a boggle in it, I often 'eerd un mysen;
Moäst loike a butter-bump,¹ for I 'eerd un aboot an' aboot,
But I stubb'd un oop wi' the lot, an' raäved an' rembled un
oot.

IX

Keäper's it wur; fo' they fun un theer a-laäid on 'is faäce
Doon i' the woild 'enemies ² afoor I comed to the plaäce.
Noäks or Thimbleby—toner 'ed shot un as deäd as a naäil.
Noäks wur 'ang'd for it oop at 'soize—but git ma my yaäle.

X

Dubbut looäk at the waäste: theer warn't not feäd for
a cow:
Nowt at all but bracken an' fuzz, an' looäk at it now—
Warnt worth nowt a haäcre, an' now theer's lots o' feäd,
Fourscore yows upon it an' some on it doon in seäd.

¹ Bittern.² Anemones.

xi

Nobbut a bit on it's left, an' I meän'd to 'a stubb'd it at fall,
 Done it ta-year I meän'd, an' runn'd plow thruff it an' all,
 If godamoightly an' parson 'ud nobbut let ma aloän,
 Meä, with haäte oonderd haäcre o' Squoire's, an' lond o'
 my oän.

xii

Do godamoightly knaw what a's doing a-täakin' o' meä?
 I beänt wonn as saws 'ere a beän an' yonder a peä;
 An' Squoire 'ull be sa mad an' all—a' dear a' dear!
 And I 'a monaged for Squoire come Michaelmas thirty year.

xiii

A mowt 'a taäken Joänes, as 'ant a 'äipoth o' sense,
 Or a mowt 'a taäken Robins—a niver mended a fence:
 But godamoightly a moost taäke meä an' taäke ma now
 Wi 'auf the cows to cauve an' Thornaby holms to plow!

xiv

Looäk 'ow quoloty smoiles when they sees ma a passin' by,
 Says to thessén naw doot "what a mon a beä sewer-ly!"
 For they knaws what I beän to Squoire sin fust a comed to
 the 'All;
 I done my duty by Squoire an' I done my duty by all.

xv

Squierie's in Lunnon, an' summun I reckons 'ull 'a to wroite,
 For who's to howd the lond ater meä thot muddles ma quoit;
 Sartin-sewer I beä, thot a weänt niver give it to Joänes,
 Noither a möänt to Robins—a niver rembles the stoäns.

xvi

But summun 'ull come ater meä mayhap wi' 'is kittle o'
 steäm
 Huzzin' an' maäzin' the blessed feälds wi' the Divil's oän
 teäm.

Gin I mun doy I mun doy, an' loife they says is sweet,
But gin I mun doy I mun doy, for I couldn abear to see it.

XVII

What atta stannin' theer for, an' doesn bring ma the yaäle?
Doctor's a 'tottler, lass, an a's hallus i' the owd taäle;
I weänt breäk rules for Doctor, a knaws naw moor nor a
floy;
Git ma my yaäle I tell tha, an' gin I mun doy I mun doy.

NORTHERN FARMER

NEW STYLE

I

DOSN'T thou 'ear my 'erse's legs, as they canters awaäy?
Proputty, proputty, proputty—that's what I 'ears 'em saäy.
Proputty, proputty, proputty—Sam, thou's an ass for thy
paäins:

Theer's moor sense i' one o' 'is legs nor in all thy braäins.

II

Woä—theer's a craw to pluck wi' tha, Sam: yon's parson's
'ouse—

Dosn't thou knew that a man mun be eäther a man or a
mouse?

Time to think on it then; for thou'll be twenty to weeäk.¹
Proputty, proputty—woä then woä—let ma 'ear mysén
speäk.

III

Me an' thy muther, Sammy, 'as beän a-talkin' o' thee;
Thou's been talkin' to muther, an' she beän a tellin' it me.
Thou'll not marry for munny—thou's sweet upo' parson's
lass—

Noä—thou'll marry fur luvv—an' we boäth on us thinks
tha an ass.

IV

Seeä'd her todaäy goä by—Saäint's-daäy—they was ringing
the bells.

She's a beauty thou thinks—an' soä is scoors o' gells,
Them as 'as munny an' all—wot's a beauty?—the flower
as blaws.

But proputty, proputty sticks, an' proputty, proputty
graws.

¹ This week.

V

Do'ant be stunt:¹ taäke time: I knaws what maäkes tha
sa mad.

Warn't I craäzed fur the lasses mysén when I wur a lad?
But I knew'd a Quäaker feller as often 'as towd ma this:
" Doänt thou marry for munny, but goä wheer munny is!"

VI

An' I went wheer munny war: an' thy mother coom to
'and,
Wi' lots o' munny laaïd by, an' a nicetish bit o' land.
Maäybe she warn't a beauty:—I niver giv it a thowt—
But warn't she as good to cuddle an' kiss as a lass as 'ant
nowt?

VII

Parson's lass 'ant nowt, an' she weänt 'a nowt when 'e's
deäd,
Mun be a guvness, lad, or summut, and addle² her breäd:
Why? fur 'e's nobbut a curate, an' weänt nivir git naw
'igher;
An' 'e maäde the bed as 'e ligs on afoor 'e coom'd to the
shire.

VIII

And thin 'e coom'd to the parish wi' lots o' 'Varsity debt,
Stook to his taaïl they did, an' 'e 'ant got shut on 'em yet.
An' 'e ligs on 'is back i' the grip, wi' noän to lend 'im a shove,
Woorse nor a far-welter'd³ yowe: fur, Sammy, 'e married
fur luvv.

IX

Luvv? what's luvv? thou can luvv thy lass an' 'er munny
too,
Maakin' 'em goä togither as they've good right to do.
Could'n I luvv thy muther by cause o' 'er munny laaïd by?
Naäy—fur I luvv'd her a vast sight moor fur it: reäson why.

¹ Obstinate.

² Earn.

³ Or fow-welter'd—said of a sheep lying on its back in the furrow.

X

Ay an' thy muther says thou wants to marry the lass,
Cooms of a gentleman burn: an' we boäth on us thinks tha
an ass.

Woä then, proputty, wiltha?—an ass as near as mays nowt¹
Woä then, wiltha? dangtha!—the bees is as fell as owt.²

XI

Breäk me a bit o' the esh for his 'eäd, lad, out o' the fence!
Gentleman burn! what's gentleman burn? is it shillins an'
pence?

Proputty, proputty's ivrything 'ere, an', Sammy, I'm blest
If it isn't the saäme oop yonder, fur them as 'as it's the best.

XII

Tis'n them as 'as munny as breäks into 'ouses an' steäls,
Them as 'as coäts to their backs an' taäkes their regular meäls.
Noä, but's its them as niver knaws wheer a meäl's to be 'ad.
Taäke my word for it, Sammy, the poor in a loomp is bad.

XIII

Them or thir feythers, tha sees, mun' a beän a laäzy lot,
Fur work mun' a gone to the gittin' whiniver munny was got.
Feyther 'ad ammost nowt; leästways 'is munny was 'id.
But 'e tued an' moil'd 'issén deäd, an 'e died a good un,
'e did.

XIV

Loook thou theer wheer Wrigglesby beck comes out by the 'ill!
Feyther run up to the farm, an' I runs up to the mill;
An' I'll run up to the brig, an' that thou'll live to see;
And if thou marries a good un I'll leäve the land to thee.

XV

Thim's my noäitions, Sammy, wheerby I means to stick;
But if thou marries a bad un, I'll leäve the land to Dick.—
Coom oop, proputty, proputty—that's what I 'ears 'im saäy—
Proputty, proputty, proputty—canter an' canter awaäy.

¹ Makes nothing.

² The flies are as fierce as anything.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

TITHONUS

THE woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.

Me only cruel immortality
Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream
The ever silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd
To his great heart none other than a God!
I ask'd thee, “ Give me immortality.”
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
Like wealthy men who care not how they give.
But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,
And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth,
And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:
Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.

Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
 From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
 And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
 Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,
 Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
 Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team
 Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,
 And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,
 And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
 In silence, then before thine answer given
 Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,
 And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,
 In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?
 "The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts."

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
 In days far-off, and with what other eyes
 I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
 The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
 The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
 Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
 Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all
 Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
 Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
 With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
 Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd
 Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,
 Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
 While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East:
 How can my nature longer mix with thine?
 Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
 Are all thy light, and cold my wrinkled feet
 Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
 Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
 Of happy men that have the power to die,

And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground;
Thou seëst all things, thou wilt see my grave:
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

THE VOYAGE

I

We left behind the painted buoy
That tosses at the harbour-mouth;
And madly danced our hearts with joy,
As fast we fleeted to the South:
How fresh was every sight and sound
On open main or winding shore!
We knew the merry world was round,
And we might sail for evermore.

II

Warm broke the breeze against the brow,
Dry sang the tackle, sang the sail:
The Lady's-head upon the prow
Caught the shrill salt, and sheer'd the gale.
The broad seas swell'd to meet the keel,
And swept behind: so quick the run,
We felt the good ship shake and reel,
We seem'd to sail into the Sun!

III

How oft we saw the Sun retire,
And burn the threshold of the night,
Fall from his Ocean-lane of fire,
And sleep beneath his pillar'd light!
How oft the purple-skirted robe
Of twilight slowly downward drawn,
As thro' the slumber of the globe
Again we dash'd into the dawn!

IV

New stars all night above the brim
 Of waters lighten'd into view;
 They climb'd as quickly, for the rim
 Changed every moment as we flew.
 Far ran the naked moon across
 The houseless ocean's heaving field,
 Or flying shone, the silver boss
 Of her own halo's dusky shield;

V

The peaky islet shifted shapes,
 High towns on hills were dimly seen,
 We past long lines of Northern capes
 And dewy Northern meadows green.
 We came to warmer waves, and deep
 Across the boundless east we drove,
 Where those long swells of breaker sweep
 The nutmeg rocks and isles of clove.

VI

By peaks that flamed, or, all in shade,
 Gloom'd the low coast and quivering brine
 With ashy rains, that spreading made
 Fantastic plume or sable pine;
 By sands and steaming flats, and floods
 Of mighty mouth, we scudded fast,
 And hills and scarlet-mingled woods
 Glow'd for a moment as we past.

VII

O hundred shores of happy climes,
 How swiftly stream'd ye by the bark!
 At times the whole sea burn'd, at times
 With wakes of fire we tore the dark;
 At times a carven craft would shoot
 From havens hid in fairy bowers,
 With naked limbs and flowers and fruit,
 But we nor paused for fruit nor flowers.

VIII

For one fair Vision ever fled
Down the waste waters day and night,
And still we follow'd where she led,
In hope to gain upon her flight.
Her face was evermore unseen,
And fixt upon the far sea-line;
But each man murmur'd "O my Queen,
I follow till I make thee mine."

IX

And now we lost her, now she gleam'd
Like Fancy made of golden air,
Now nearer to the prow she seem'd
Like Virtue firm, like Knowledge fair,
Now high on waves that idly burst
Like Heavenly Hope she crown'd the sea,
And now, the bloodless point reversed,
She bore the blade of Liberty.

X

And only one among us—him
We pleased not—he was seldom pleased:
He saw not far: his eyes were dim:
But ours he swore were all diseased.
"A ship of fools," he shriek'd in spite,
"A ship of fools," he sneer'd and wept.
And overboard one stormy night
He cast his body, and on we swept.

XI

And never sail of ours was furl'd,
Nor anchor dropt at eve or morn;
We loved the glories of the world,
But laws of nature were our scorn;
For blasts would rise and rave and cease,
But whence were those that drove the sail
Across the whirlwind's heart of peace,
And to and thro' the counter-gale?

xii

Again to colder climes we came,
 For still we follow'd where she led:
 Now mate is blind and captain lame,
 And half the crew are sick or dead.
 But blind or lame or sick or sound
 We follow that which flies before:
 We know the merry world is round,
 And we may sail for evermore.

IN THE VALLEY OF CAUTERETZ

ALL along the valley, stream that flashest white,
 Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,
 All along the valley, where thy waters flow,
 I walk'd with one I loved two and thirty years ago.
 All along the valley while I walk'd to-day,
 The two and thirty years were a mist that rolls away;
 For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed
 Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,
 And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,
 The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.

THE FLOWER

ONCE in a golden hour
 I cast to earth a seed.
 Up there came a flower,
 The people said, a weed.

To and fro they went
 Thro' my garden bower,
 And muttering discontent
 Cursed me and my flower.

Then it grew so tall
It wore a crown of light,
But thieves from o'er the wall
Stole the seed by night.

Sow'd it far and wide
By every town and tower,
Till all the people cried,
"Splendid is the flower."

Read my little fable:
He that runs may read.
Most can raise the flowers now,
For all have got the seed.

And some are pretty enough,
And some are poor indeed;
And now again the people
Call it but a weed.

REQUIESCAT

FAIR is her cottage in its place,
Where yon broad water sweetly slowly glides.
It sees itself from thatch to base
Dream in the sliding tides.

And fairer she, but ah how soon to die!
Her quiet dream of life this hour may cease.
Her peaceful being slowly passes by
To some more perfect peace.

THE SAILOR BOY

HE rose at dawn and, fired with hope,
Shot o'er the seething harbour-bar,
And reach'd the ship and caught the rope,
And whistled to the morning star.

And while he whistled long and loud
He heard a fierce mermaiden cry,
“O boy, tho' thou art young and proud,
I see the place where thou wilt lie.

“The sands and yeasty surges mix
In caves about the dreary bay,
And on thy ribs the limpet sticks,
And in thy heart the scrawl shall play.”

“Fool,” he answer'd, “death is sure
To those that stay and those that roam,
But I will nevermore endure
To sit with empty hands at home.

“My mother clings about my neck,
My sisters crying ‘stay for shame;’
My father raves of death and wreck,
They are all to blame, they are all to blame.

“God help me! save I take my part
Of danger on the roaring sea,
A devil rises in my heart,
Far worse than any death to me.”

THE ISLET

“WHITHER, O whither, love, shall we go,
For a score of sweet little summers or so,”
The sweet little wife of the singer said,
On the day that follow’d the day she was wed,
“Whither O whither, love, shall we go?”
And the singer shaking his curly head
Turn’d as he sat, and struck the keys
There at his right with a sudden crash,
Singing, “And shall it be over the seas
With a crew that is neither rude nor rash,
But a bevy of Eroses apple-cheek’d,
In a shallop of crystal ivory-beak’d,
With a satin sail of a ruby glow,
To a sweet little Eden on earth that I know,
A mountain islet pointed and peak’d;
Waves on a diamond shingle dash,
Cataract brooks to the ocean run,
Fairly-delicate palaces shine
Mixt with myrtle and clad with vine,
And overstream’d and silvery-streak’d
With many a rivulet high against the Sun
The facets of the glorious mountain flash
Above the valleys of palm and pine.”

“Thither, O thither, love, let us go.”

“No, no, no!
For in all that exquisite isle, my dear,
There is but one bird with a musical throat,
And his compass is but of a single note,
That it makes one weary to hear.”

“Mock me not! mock me not! love, let us go.”

"No, love, no.

For the bud ever breaks into bloom on the tree,
 And a storm never wakes on the lonely sea,
 And a worm is there in the lonely wood,
 That pierces the liver and blackens the blood,
 And makes it a sorrow to be."

THE RINGLET

I

"YOUR ringlets, your ringlets,
 That look so golden-gay,
 If you will give me one, but one,
 To kiss it night and day,
 Then never chilling touch of Time
 Will turn it silver-gray;
 And then shall I know it is all true gold
 To flame and sparkle and stream as of old,
 Till all the comets in heaven are cold,
 And all her stars decay."
 "Then take it, love, and put it by;
 This cannot change, nor yet can I."

2

"My ringlet, my ringlet,
 That art so golden-gay,
 Now never chilling touch of Time
 Can turn thee silver-gray;
 And a lad may wink, and a girl may hint,
 And a fool may say his say;
 For my doubts and fears were all amiss,
 And I swear henceforth by this and this,
 That a doubt will only come for a kiss,
 And a fear to be kiss'd away."
 "Then kiss it, love, and put it by:
 If this can change, why so can I."

II

O Ringlet, O Ringlet,
I kiss'd you night and day,
And Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 You still are golden-gay,
But Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 You should be silver-gray:
For what is this which now I'm told,
I that took you for true gold,
She that gave you's bought and sold,
 Sold, sold.

2

O Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 She blush'd a rosy red,
When Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 She clipt you from her head,
And Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 She gave you me, and said,
“Come, kiss it, love, and put it by:
If this can change, why so can I.”
O fie, you golden nothing, fie
 You golden lie.

3

O Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 I count you much to blame,
For Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 You put me much to shame,
So Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 I doom you to the flame.
For what is this which now I learn,
Has given all my faith a turn?
Burn, you glossy heretic, burn,
 Burn, burn.

A WELCOME TO ALEXANDRA

MARCH 7, 1863

Welcome her, thunders of fort and of fleet!
Welcome her, thundering cheer of the street!
Welcome her, all things youthful and sweet,
Scatter the blossom under her feet!

Break, happy land, into earlier flowers!
Make music, O bird, in the new-budded bowers!
Blazon your mottoes of blessing and prayer!
Welcome her, welcome her, all that is ours!
Warble, O bugle, and trumpet, blare!
Flags, flutter out upon turrets and towers!
Flames, on the windy headland flare!
Utter your jubilee, steeple and spire!
Clash, ye bells, in the merry March air!
Flash, ye cities, in rivers of fire!
Rush to the roof, sudden rocket, and higher
Melt into stars for the land's desire!
Roll and rejoice, jubilant voice,
Roll as a ground-swell dash'd on the strand,
Roar as the sea when he welcomes the land,
And welcome her, welcome the land's desire,
The sea-kings' daughter as happy as fair,
Blissful bride of a blissful heir,
Bride of the heir of the kings of the sea—
O joy to the people and joy to the throne,
Come to us, love us and make us your own:
For Saxon or Dane or Norman we,
Teuton or Celt, or whatever we be,
We are each all Dane in our welcome of thee,

A DEDICATION

DEAR, near and true—no truer Time himself
Can prove you, tho' he make you evermore
Dearer and nearer, as the rapid of life
Shoots to the fall—take this and pray that he,
Who wrote it, honouring your sweet faith in him,
May trust himself; and spite of praise and scorn,
As one who feels the immeasurable world,
Attain the wise indifference of the wise;
And after Autumn past—if left to pass
His autumn into seeming-leafless days—
Draw toward the long frost and longest night,
Wearing his wisdom lightly, like the fruit
Which in our winter woodland looks a flower.¹

EXPERIMENTS

BOÄDICEA

WHILE about the shore of Mona those Neronian legionaries
Burnt and broke the grove and altar of the Druid and
Druidess,
Far in the East Boädicéa, standing loftily charioted,
Mad and maddening all that heard her in her fierce volubility,
Girt by half the tribes of Britain, near the colony Cámu-
lodúne,
Yell'd and shriek'd between her daughters o'er a wild
confederacy.

“ They that scorn the tribes and call us Britain's barbarous
populaces,
Did they hear me, would they listen, did they pity me
supplicating?
Shall I heed them in their anguish? shall I brook to be
supplicated?

¹ The fruit of the Spindle-tree (*Euonymus Europæus*).

Hear Icenian, Catieuchlanian, hear Coritanian, Trinobant!
 Must their ever-ravening eagle's beak and talon annihilate us?
 Tear the noble heart of Britain, leave it gorily quivering?
 Bark an answer, Britain's raven! bark and blacken innumerable,
 Blacken round the Roman carrion, make the carcase a skeleton,
 Kite and kestrel, wolf and wolfkin, from the wilderness,
 wallow in it,
 Till the face of Bel be brighten'd, Taranis be propitiated.
 Lo their colony half-defended! lo their colony, Cámulodúne!
 There the horde of Roman robbers mock at a barbarous
 adversary.
 There the hive of Roman liars worship a gluttonous emperor-idiot.
 Such is Rome, and this her deity: hear it, Spirit of Cássivélaún!

“ Hear it, Gods! the Gods have heard it, O Icenian, O Coritanian!
 Doubt not ye the Gods have answer'd, Catieuchlanian,
 Trinobant.
 These have told us all their anger in miraculous utterances,
 Thunder, a flying fire in heaven, a murmur heard aërially,
 Phantom sound of blows descending, moan of an enemy
 massacred,
 Phantom wail of women and children, multitudinous agonies.
 Bloodily flow'd the Tamesa rolling phantom bodies of horses
 and men;
 Then a phantom colony smoulder'd on the refluent estuary;
 Lastly yonder yester-even, suddenly giddily tottering—
 There was one who watch'd and told me—down their statue
 of Victory fell.
 Lo their precious Roman bantling, lo the colony Cámulodúne,
 Shall we teach it a Roman lesson? shall we care to be pitiful?
 Shall we deal with it as an infant? shall we dandle it
 amorously?

“ Hear Icenian, Catieuchlanian, hear Coritanian, Trinobant!
 While I roved about the forest, long and bitterly meditating,
 There I heard them in the darkness, at the mystical ceremony,

Loosely robed in flying raiment, sang the terrible prophetesses.

' Fear not, isle of blowing woodland, isle of silvery parapets !
Tho' the Roman eagle shadow thee, tho' the gathering enemy narrow thee,

Thou shalt wax and he shall dwindle, thou shalt be the mighty one yet !

Thine the liberty, thine the glory, thine the deeds to be celebrated,

Thine the myriad-rolling ocean, light and shadow illimitable,
Thine the lands of lasting summer, many-blossoming Paradises,

Thine the North and thine the South and thine the battle-thunder of God.'

So they chanted: how shall Britain light upon auguries happier ?

So they chanted in the darkness, and there cometh a victory now.

" Hear Icenian, Catieuchlanian, hear Coritanian, Trinobant !

Me the wife of rich Prasutagus, me the lover of liberty,
Me they seized and me they tortured, me they lash'd and humiliated,

Me the sport of ribald Veterans, mine of ruffian violators !
See they sit, they hide their faces, miserable in ignominy !

Wherefore in me burns an anger, not by blood to be satiated.
Lo the palaces and the temple, lo the colony Cámulodúne !
There they ruled, and thence they wasted all the flourishing territory,

Thither at their will they haled the yellow-ringleted Britoness —

Bloodily, bloodily fall the battle-axe, unexhausted, inexorable.

Shout Icenian, Catieuchlanian, shout Coritanian, Trinobant,
Till the victim hear within and yearn to hurry precipitously
Like the leaf in a roaring whirlwind, like the smoke in a hurricane whirl'd.

Lo the colony, there they rioted in the city of Cúnobelíne !
There they drank in cups of emerald, there at tables of ebony lay,

Rolling on their purple couches in their tender effeminacy.
 There they dwelt and there they rioted; there—there—they
 dwell no more.
 Burst the gates, and burn the palaces, break the works of
 the statuary,
 Take the hoary Roman head and shatter it, hold it abomin-
 able,
 Cut the Roman boy to pieces in his lust and voluptuousness,
 Lash the maiden into swooning, me they lash'd and humili-
 ated,
 Chop the breasts from off the mother, dash the brains of
 the little ones out,
 Up my Britons, on my chariot, on my chargers, trample
 them under us."

So the Queen Boädicéa, standing loftily charioted,
 Brandishing in her hand a dart and rolling glances lioness-
 like,
 Yell'd and shrieked between her daughters in her fierce
 volubility.
 Till her people all around the royal chariot agitated,
 Madly dash'd the darts together, writhing barbarous lineä-
 ments,
 Made the noise of frosty woodlands, when they shiver in
 January,
 Roar'd as when the rolling breakers boom and blanch on the
 precipices,
 Yell'd as when the winds of winter tear an oak on a pro-
 montory.
 So the silent colony hearing her tumultuous adversaries
 Clash the darts and on the buckler beat with rapid unanimous
 hand,
 Thought on all her evil tyrannies, all her pitiless avarice,
 Till she felt the heart within her fall and flutter tremulously,
 Then her pulses at the clamouring of her enemy fainted away.
 Out of evil evil flourishes, out of tyranny tyranny buds.
 Ran the land with Roman slaughter, multitudinous agonies.
 Perish'd many a maid and matron, many a valourous
 legionary.
 Fell the colony, city, and citadel, London, Verulam,
 Cámulodúne.

ATTEMPTS AT CLASSIC METRES IN QUANTITY

TRANSLATIONS OF HOMER

Hexameters and Pentameters

THESE lame hexameters the strong-wing'd music of Homer!

No—but a most burlesque barbarous experiment.

When was a harsher sound ever heard, ye Muses, in England?

When did a frog coarser croak upon our Helicon?

Hexameters no worse than daring Germany gave us,

Barbarous experiment, barbarous hexameters!

MILTON

Alcaics

O MIGHTY-MOUTH'D inventor of harmonies,

O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,

God-gifted organ-voice of England,

Milton, a name to resound for ages;

Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,

Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,

Tower, as the deep-domed empyræan

Rings to the roar of an angel onset—

Me rather all that bowery loneliness,

The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,

And bloom profuse and cedar arches

Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean

Where some refulgent sunset of India

Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,

And crimson-hued the stately palmwoods

Whisper in odorous heights of even.

Hendecasyllabics

O you chorus of indolent reviewers,

Irresponsible, indolent reviewers,

Look, I come to the test, a tiny poem

All composed in a metre of Catullus,
 All in quantity, careful of my motion,
 Like the skater on ice that hardly bears him,
 Lest I fall unawares before the people,
 Waking laughter in indolent reviewers.
 Should I flounder awhile without a tumble
 Thro' this metrification of Catullus,
 They should speak to me not without a welcome,
 All that chorus of indolent reviewers.
 Hard, hard, hard is it, only not to tumble,
 So fantastical is the dainty metre.
 Wherefore slight me not wholly, nor believe me
 Too presumptuous, indolent reviewers.
 O blatant Magazines, regard me rather—
 Since I blush to belaud myself a moment—
 As some rare little rose, a piece of inmost
 Horticultural art, or half coquette-like
 Maiden, not to be greeted unbenignly.

SPECIMEN OF A TRANSLATION OF THE ILIAD IN BLANK VERSE

So Hector said, and sea-like roar'd his host;
 Then loosed their sweating horses from the yoke,
 And each beside his chariot bound his own;
 And oxen from the city, and goodly sheep
 In haste they drove, and honey-hearted wine
 And bread from out the houses brought, and heap'd
 Their firewood, and the winds from off the plain
 Roll'd the rich vapour far into the heaven.
 And these all night upon the bridge ¹ of war
 Sat glorying; many a fire before them blazed:
 As when in heaven the stars about the moon
 Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,
 And every height comes out, and jutting peak
 And valley, and the immeasurable heavens
 Break open to their highest, and all the stars
 Shine, and the Shepherd gladdens in his heart:
 So many a fire between the ships and stream
 Of Xanthus blazed before the towers of Troy,

¹ Or ridge.

A thousand on the plain; and close by each
 Sat fifty in the blaze of burning fire;
 And champing golden grain, the horses stood
 Hard by their chariots, waiting for the dawn.¹

Iliad 8. 542-561.

THE GOLDEN SUPPER

[This poem is founded upon a story in Boccaccio.

A young lover, Julian, whose cousin and foster-sister, Camilla, has been wedded to his friend and rival, Lionel, endeavours to narrate the story of his own love for her, and the strange sequel of it. He speaks of having been haunted in delirium by visions and the sound of bells, sometimes tolling for a funeral, and at last ringing for a marriage; but he breaks away, overcome, as he approaches the Event, and a witness to it completes the tale.]

HE flies the event: he leaves the event to me:
 Poor Julian—how he rush'd away; the bells,
 Those marriage bells, echoing in ear and heart—
 But cast a parting glance at me, you saw,
 As who should say “continue.” Well, he had
 One golden hour—of triumph shall I say?
 Solace at least—before he left his home.

Would you had seen him in that hour of his!
 He moved thro' all of it majestically—
 Restrain'd himself quite to the close—but now—

Whether they *were* his lady's marriage-bells,
 Or prophets of them in his fantasy,
 I never ask'd: but Lionel and the girl
 Were wedded, and our Julian came again
 Back to his mother's house among the pines.
 But there, their gloom, the mountains and the Bay,
 The whole land weigh'd him down as *Ætna* does
 The Giant of Mythology: he would go,
 Would leave the land for ever, and had gone

¹ Or more literally—

And eating hoary grain and pulse the steeds
 Stood by their cars, waiting the thronèd morn.

Surely, but for a whisper, “ Go not yet,”
Some warning, and divinely as it seem’d
By that which follow’d—but of this I deem
As of the visions that he told—the event
Glanced back upon them in his after life,
And partly made them—tho’ he knew it not.

And thus he stay’d and would not look at her—
No, not for months: but, when the eleventh moon
After their marriage lit the lover’s Bay,
Heard yet once more the tolling bell, and said,
Would you could toll me out of life, but found—
All softly as his mother broke it to him—
A crueller reason than a crazy ear,
For that low knell tolling his lady dead—
Dead—and had lain three days without a pulse:
All that look’d on her had pronounced her dead.
And so they bore her (for in Julian’s land
They never nail a dumb head up in elm),
Bore her free-faced to the free airs of heaven,
And laid her in the vault of her own kin.

What did he then? not die: he is here and hale—
Not plunge headforemost from the mountain there,
And leave the name of Lover’s Leap; not he:
He knew the meaning of the whisper now,
Thought that he knew it. “ This, I stay’d for this;
O love, I have not seen you for so long.
Now, now, will I go down into the grave,
I will be all alone with all I love,
And kiss her on the lips. She is his no more:
The dead returns to me, and I go down
To kiss the dead.”

The fancy stirr’d him so
He rose and went, and entering the dim vault,
And, making there a sudden light, beheld
All round about him that which all will be.
The light was but a flash, and went again.
Then at the far end of the vault he saw
His lady with the moonlight on her face;

Her breast as in a shadow-prison, bars
Of black and bands of silver, which the moon
Struck from an open grating overhead
High in the wall, and all the rest of her
Drown'd in the gloom and horror of the vault.

"It was my wish," he said, "to pass, to sleep.
To rest, to be with her—till the great day
Peal'd on us with that music which rights all,
And raised us hand in hand." And kneeling there
Down in the dreadful dust that once was man,
Dust, as he said, that once was loving hearts,
Hearts that had beat with such a love as mine—
Not such as mine, no, nor for such as her—
He softly put his arm about her neck
And kiss'd her more than once, till helpless death
And silence made him bold—nay, but I wrong him,
He reverenced his dear lady even in death;
But, placing his true hand upon her heart,
"O, you warm heart," he moan'd, "not even death
Can chill you all at once;" then starting, thought
His dreams had come again. "Do I wake or sleep?
Or am I made immortal, or my love
Mortal once more?" It beat—the heart—it beat:
Faint—but it beat: at which his own began
To pulse with such a vehemence that it drown'd
The feebler motion underneath his hand.
But when at last his doubts were satisfied,
He raisel her softly from the sepulchre,
And, wrapping her all over with the cloak
He came in, and now striding fast, and now
Sitting awhile to rest, but evermore
Holding his golden burthen in his arms,
So bore her thro' the solitary land
Back to the mother's house where she was born.

There the good mother's kindly ministering,
With half a night's appliances, recall'd
Her fluttering life: she raised an eye that ask'd
"Where?" till the things familiar to her youth
Had made a silent answer: then she spoke,

“Here! and how came I here?” and learning it
 (They told her somewhat rashly as I think)
 At once began to wander and to wail,
 “Ay, but you know that you must give me back:
 Send! bid him come;” but Lionel was away
 Stung by his loss had vanish’d, none knew where.
 “He casts me out,” she wept, “and goes”—a wail
 That seeming something, yet was nothing, born
 Not from believing mind, but shatter’d nerve,
 Yet haunting Julian, as her own reproof
 At some precipitance in her burial.
 Then, when her own true spirit had return’d,
 “O yes, and you,” she said, “and none but you,
 For you have given me life and love again,
 And none but you yourself shall tell him of it,
 And you shall give me back when he returns.”
 “Stay then a little,” answer’d Julian, “here,
 And keep yourself, none knowing, to yourself;
 And I will do your will. I may not stay,
 No, not an hour; but send me notice of him
 When he returns, and then will I return,
 And I will make a solemn offering of you
 To him you love.” And faintly she replied,
 “And I will do *your* will, and none shall know.”

Not know? with such a secret to be known.
 But all their house was old and loved them both,
 And all the house had known the loves of both;
 Had died almost to serve them any way,
 And all the land was waste and solitary:
 And then he rode away; but after this,
 An hour or two, Camilla’s travail came
 Upon her, and that day a boy was born,
 Heir of his face and land, to Lionel.

And thus our lonely lover rode away,
 And pausing at a hostel in a marsh,
 There fever seized upon him: myself was then
 Travelling that land, and meant to rest an hour;
 And sitting down to such a base repast,
 It makes me angry yet to speak of it—

I heard a groaning overhead, and climb'd
The moulder'd stairs (for everything was vile)
And in a loft, with none to wait on him,
Found, as it seem'd, a skeleton alone,
Raving of dead men's dust and beating hearts.

A dismal hostel in a dismal land,
A flat malarian world of reed and rush!
But there from fever and my care of him
Sprang up a friendship that may help us yet.
For while we roam'd along the dreary coast,
And waited for her message, piece by piece
I learnt the drearier story of his life;
And, tho' he loved and honour'd Lionel,
Found that the sudden wail his lady made
Dwelt in his fancy: did he know her worth,
Her beauty even? should he not be taught,
Ev'n by the price that others set upon it,
The value of that jewel he had to guard?

Suddenly came her notice and we past,
I with our lover to his native Bay.

This love is of the brain, the mind, the soul:
That makes the sequel pure; tho' some of us
Beginning at the sequel know no more.
Not such am I: and yet I say, the bird
That will not hear my call, however sweet,
But if my neighbour's whistle answers him—
What matter? there are others in the wood.
Yet when I saw her (and I thought him crazed,
Tho' not with such a craziness as needs
A cell and keeper), those dark eyes of hers—
Oh! such dark eyes! and not her eyes alone,
But all from these to where she touch'd on earth,
For such a craziness as Julian's seem'd
No less than one divine apology.

So sweetly and so modestly she came
To greet us, her young hero in her arms!
“Kiss him,” she said. “You gave me life again.

He, but for you, had never seen it once.
His other father you! Kiss him, and then
Forgive him, if his name be Julian too."

Talk of lost hopes and broken heart! his own
Sent such a flame into his face, I knew
Some sudden vivid pleasure hit him there.

But he was all the more resolved to go,
And sent at once to Lionel, praying him
By that great love they both had borne the dead,
To come and revel for one hour with him
Before he left the land for evermore;
And then to friends—they were not many—who lived
Scatteringly about that lonely land of his,
And bade them to a banquet of farewells.

And Julian made a solemn feast: I never
Sat at a costlier; for all round his hall
From column on to column, as in a wood,
Not such as here—an equatorial one,
Great garlands swung and blossom'd; and beneath,
Heirlooms, and ancient miracles of Art,
Chalice and salver, wines that, Heaven knows when,
Had suck'd the fire of some forgotten sun,
And kept it thro' a hundred years of gloom,
Yet glowing in a heart of ruby—cups
Where nymph and god ran ever round in gold—
Others of glass as costly—some with gems
Movable and resettable at will,
And trebling all the rest in value—Ah heavens!
Why need I tell you all?—suffice to say
That whatsoever such a house as his,
And his was old, has in it rare or fair
Was brought before the guest: and they, the guests,
Wonder'd at some strange light in Julian's eyes
(I told you that he had his golden hour),
And such a feast, ill-suited as it seem'd
To such a time, to Lionel's loss and his,
And that resolved self-exile from a land
He never would revisit, such a feast

So rich, so strange, and stranger ev'n than rich,
But rich as for the nuptials of a king.

And stranger yet, at one end of the hall
Two great funereal curtains, looping down,
Parted a little ere they met the floor,
About a picture of his lady, taken
Some years before, and falling hid the frame.
And just above the parting was a lamp:
So the sweet figure folded round with night
Seem'd stepping out of darkness with a smile.

Well then—our solemn feast—we ate and drank,
And might—the wines being of such nobleness—
Have jested also, but for Julian's eyes,
And something weird and wild about it all:
What was it? for our lover seldom spoke,
Scarce touch'd the meats; but ever and anon
A priceless goblet with a priceless wine
Arising, show'd he drank beyond his use;
And when the feast was near an end, he said:

“ There is a custom in the Orient, friends—
I read of it in Persia—when a man
Will honour those who feast with him, he brings
And shows them whatsoever he accounts
Of all his treasures the most beautiful,
Gold, jewels, arms, whatever it may be.
This custom—”

Pausing here a moment, all
The guests broke in upon him with meeting hands
And cries about the banquet—“ Beautiful!
Who could desire more beauty at a feast? ”

The lover answer'd, “ There is more than one
Here sitting who desires it. Laud me not
Before my time, but hear me to the close.
This custom steps yet further when the guest
Is loved and honour'd to the uttermost.
For after he has shown him gems or gold,

He brings and sets before him in rich guise
 That which is thrice as beautiful as these,
 The beauty that is dearest to his heart—
 ‘O my heart’s lord, would I could show you,’ he says,
 ‘Ev’n my heart too.’ And I propose to-night
 To show you what is dearest to my heart,
 And my heart too.

“ But solve me first a doubt.

I knew a man, nor many years ago;
 He had a faithful servant, one who loved
 His master more than all on earth beside.
 He falling sick, and seeming close on death,
 His master would not wait until he died,
 But bade his menials bear him from the door,
 And leave him in the public way to die.
 I knew another, not so long ago,
 Who found the dying servant, took him home,
 And fed, and cherish’d him, and saved his life.
 I ask you now, should this first master claim
 His service, whom does it belong to? him
 Who thrust him out, or him who saved his life?”

This question, so flung down before the guests,
 And balanced either way by each, at length
 When some were doubtful how the law would hold,
 Was handed over by consent of all
 To one who had not spoken, Lionel.

Fair speech was his, and delicate of phrase.
 And he beginning languidly—his loss
 Weigh’d on him yet—but warming as he went,
 Glanced at the point of law, to pass it by,
 Affirming that as long as either lived,
 By all the laws of love and gratefulness,
 The service of the one so saved was due
 All to the saver—adding, with a smile,
 The first for many weeks—a semi-smile
 As at a strong conclusion—“ body and soul
 And life and limbs, all his to work his will.”

Then Julian made a secret sign to me

To bring Camilla down before them all.
And crossing her own picture as she came,
And looking as much lovelier as herself
Is lovelier than all others—on her head
A diamond circlet, and from under this
A veil, that seem'd no more than gilded air,
Flying by each fine ear, an Eastern gauze
With seeds of gold—so, with that grace of hers,
Slow-moving as a wave against the wind,
That flings a mist behind it in the sun—
And bearing high in arms the mighty babe,
The younger Julian, who himself was crown'd
With roses, none so rosy as himself—
And over all her babe and her the jewels
Of many generations of his house
Sparkled and flash'd, for he had decked them out
As for a solemn sacrifice of love—
So she came in:—I am long in telling it.
I never yet beheld a thing so strange,
Sad, sweet, and strange together—floated in—
While all the guests in mute amazement rose—
And slowly pacing to the middle hall,
Before the board, there paused and stood, her breast
Hard-heaving, and her eyes upon her feet,
Not daring yet to glance at Lionel.
But him she carried, him nor lights nor feast
Dazed or amazed, nor eyes of men; who cared
Only to use his own, and staring wide
And hungering for the gilt and jewell'd world
About him, look'd, as he is like to prove,
When Julian goes, the lord of all he saw.

“ My guests,” said Julian: “ you are honour'd now
Ev'n to the uttermost: in her behold
Of all my treasures the most beautiful,
Of all things upon earth the dearest to me.”
Then waving us a sign to seat ourselves,
Led his dear lady to a chair of state.
And I, by Lionel sitting, saw his face
Fire, and dead ashes and all fire again
Thrice in a second, felt him tremble too,

And heard him muttering, " So like, so like;
 She never had a sister. I knew none.
 Some cousin of his and hers—O God, so like!"
 And then he suddenly ask'd her if she were.
 She shook, and cast her eyes down, and was dumb.
 And then some other question'd if she came
 From foreign lands, and still she did not speak.
 Another, if the boy were hers: but she
 To all their queries answer'd not a word,
 Which made the amazement more, till one of them
 Said, shuddering, " Her spectre!" But his friend
 Replied, in half a whisper, " Not at least
 The spectre that will speak if spoken to.
 Terrible pity, if one so beautiful
 Prove, as I almost dread to find her, dumb!"

But Julian, sitting by her, answer'd all:
 " She is but dumb, because in her you see
 That faithful servant whom we spoke about,
 Obedient to her second master now;
 Which will not last. I have here to-night a guest
 So bound to me by common love and loss—
 What! shall I bind him more? in his behalf,
 Shall I exceed the Persian, giving him
 That which of all things is the dearest to me,
 Not only showing? and he himself pronounced
 That my rich gift is wholly mine to give.

" Now all be dumb, and promise all of you
 Not to break in on what I say by word
 Or whisper, while I show you all my heart."
 And then began the story of his love
 As here to-day, but not so wordily—
 The passionate moment would not suffer that—
 Past thro' his visions to the burial; thence
 Down to this last strange hour in his own hall;
 And then rose up, and with him all his guests
 Once more as by enchantment; all but he,
 Lionel, who fain had risen, but fell again,
 And sat as if in chains—to whom he said:

"Take my free gift, my cousin, for your wife;
And were it only for the giver's sake,
And tho' she seem so like the one you lost,
Yet cast her not away so suddenly,
Lest there be none left here to bring her back:
I leave this land for ever." Here he ceased.

Then taking his dear lady by one hand,
And bearing on one arm the noble babe,
He slowly brought them both to Lionel.
And there the widower husband and dead wife
Rush'd each at each with a cry, that rather seem'd
For some new death than for a life renew'd;
At this the very babe began to wail;
At once they turn'd, and caught and brought him in
To their charm'd circle, and, half-killing him
With kisses, round him closed and claspt again.
But Lionel, when at last he freed himself
From wife and child, and lifted up a face
All over glowing with the sun of life,
And love, and boundless thanks—the sight of this
So frightened our good friend, that turning to me
And saying, "It is over: let us go"—
There were our horses ready at the doors—
We bade them no farewell, but mounting these
He past for ever from his native land;
And I with him, my Julian, back to mine.

THE VICTIM

I

A PLAGUE upon the people fell,
 A famine after laid them low,
 Then thorpe and byre arose in fire,
 For on them brake the sudden foe;
 So thick they died the people cried,
 " The Gods are moved against the land."
 The Priest in horror about his altar
 To Thor and Odin lifted a hand:
 " Help us from famine
 And plague and strife!
 What would you have of us?
 Human life?
 Were it our nearest,
 Were it our dearest,
 (Answer, O answer)
 We give you his life."

II

But still the foeman spoil'd and burn'd,
 And cattle died, and deer in wood,
 And bird in air, and fishes turn'd
 And whiten'd all the rolling flood;
 And dead men lay all over the way,
 Or down in a furrow scathed with flame:
 And ever and aye the Priesthood moan'd
 Till at last it seem'd that an answer came:
 " The King is happy
 In child and wife;
 Take you his dearest,
 Give us a life."

III

The Priest went out by heath and hill;
 The King was hunting in the wild;
 They found the mother sitting still;
 She cast her arms about the child.

The child was only eight summers old,
 His beauty still with his years increased,
 His face was ruddy, his hair was gold,
 He seem'd a victim due to the priest.

The Priest beheld him,
 And cried with joy,
 "The Gods have answer'd:
 We give them the boy."

IV

The King return'd from out the wild,
 He bore but little game in hand;
 The mother said, "They have taken the child
 To spill his blood and heal the land:
 The land is sick, the people diseased,
 And blight and famine on all the lea:
 The holy Gods, they must be appeased,
 So I pray you tell the truth to me.
 They have taken our son,
 They will have his life.
 Is *he* your dearest?
 Or I, the wife?"

V

The King bent low, with hand on brow,
 He stay'd his arms upon his knee:
 "O wife, what use to answer now?
 For now the Priest has judged for me."
 The King was shaken with holy fear;
 "The Gods," he said, "would have chosen well;
 Yet both are near, and both are dear,
 And which the dearest I cannot tell!"
 But the Priest was happy,
 His victim won:
 "We have his dearest,
 His only son!"

VI

The rites prepared, the victim bared,
 The knife uprising toward the blow,
 To the altar-stone she sprang alone,
 "Me, not my darling, no!"

He caught her away with a sudden cry;
 Suddenly from him brake his wife,
 And shrieking, “*I am his dearest, I—*
I am his dearest!” rush’d on the knife.
 And the Priest was happy,
 “O, Father Odin,
 We give you a life.
 Which was his nearest?
 Who was his dearest?
 The Gods have answer’d;
 We give them the wife!”

WAGES

GLORY of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
 Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea—
 Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—
 Nay, but she aim’d not at glory, no lover of glory she:
 Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

The wages of sin is death: if the wages of Virtue be dust,
 Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm
 and the fly?
 She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
 To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky:
 Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM

THE sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the
 plains—
 Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

Is not the Vision He? tho’ He be not that which He seems?
 Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in
 dreams?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?

Dark is the world to thee: thyself art the reason why;
For is He not all but thou, that hast power to feel "I am I?"

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy
doom,
Making Him broken gleams, and a stifled splendour and
gloom.

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can
meet—

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and
feet.

God is law, say the wise; O Soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

Law is God, say some: no God at all, says the fool;
For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a
pool;

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot
see;

But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He?

FLOWER in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies;—
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

LUCRETIUS

LUCILIA, wedded to Lucretius, found
 Her master cold; for when the morning flush
 Of passion and the first embrace had died
 Between them, tho' he loved her none the less,
 Yet often when the woman heard his foot
 Return from pacings in the field, and ran
 To greet him with a kiss, the master took
 Small notice, or austerely, for—his mind
 Half buried in some weightier argument,
 Or fancy-borne perhaps upon the rise
 And long roll of the Hexameter—he past
 To turn and ponder those three hundred scrolls
 Left by the Teacher whom he held divine.
 She brook'd it not; but wrathful, petulant,
 Dreaming some rival, sought and found a witch
 Who brew'd the philtre which had power, they said,
 To lead an errant passion home again.
 And this, at times, she mingled with his drink,
 And this destroy'd him; for the wicked broth
 Confused the chemic labour of the blood,
 And tickling the brute brain within the man's
 Made havoc among those tender cells, and check'd
 His power to shape: he loath'd himself; and once
 After a tempest woke upon a morn
 That mock'd him with returning calm, and cried:

“ Storm in the night! for thrice I heard the rain
 Rushing; and once the flash of a thunderbolt—
 Methought I never saw so fierce a fork—
 Struck out the streaming mountain-side, and show'd
 A riotous confluence of watercourses
 Blanching and billowing in a hollow of it,
 Where all but yester-eve was dusty-dry.

“ Storm, and what dreams, ye holy Gods, what dreams!
 For thrice I waken'd after dreams. Perchance
 We do but recollect the dreams that come

Just ere the waking: terrible! for it seem'd
A void was made in Nature; all her bonds
Crack'd; and I saw the flaring atom-streams
And torrents of her myriad universe,
Ruining along the illimitable inane,
Fly on to clash together again, and make
Another and another frame of things
For ever: that was mine, my dream, I knew it—
Of and belonging to me, as the dog
With inward yelp and restless forefoot plies
His function of the woodland: but the next!
I thought that all the blood by Sylla shed
Came driving rainlike down again on earth,
And where it dash'd the reddening meadow, sprang
No dragon warriors from Cadmean teeth,
For these I thought my dream would show to me,
But girls, Hetairai, curious in their art,
Hired animalisms, vile as those that made
The mulberry-faced Dictator's orgies worse
Than aught they fable of the quiet Gods.
And hands they mixt, and yell'd and round me drove
In narrowing circles till I yell'd again
Half-suffocated, and sprang up, and saw—
Was it the first beam of my latest day?

“ Then, then, from utter gloom stood out the breasts,
The breasts of Helen, and hoveringly a sword
Now over and now under, now direct,
Pointed itself to pierce, but sank down shamed
At all that beauty; and as I stared, a fire,
The fire that left a roofless Ilion,
Shot out of them, and scorch'd me that I woke.

“ Is this thy vengeance, holy Venus, thine,
Because I would not one of thine own doves,
Not ev'n a rose, were offer'd to thee? thine,
Forgetful how my rich proemion makes
Thy glory fly along the Italian field,
In lays that will outlast thy Deity?

“ Deity? nay, thy worshippers. My tongue

Trips, or I speak profanely. Which of these
Angers thee most, or angers thee at all?
Not if thou be'st of those who, far aloof
From envy, hate and pity, and spite and scorn,
Live the great life which all our greatest fain
Would follow, center'd in eternal calm.

“ Nay, if thou can’st, O Goddess, like ourselves
Touch, and be touch’d, then would I cry to thee
To kiss thy Mavors, roll thy tender arms
Round him, and keep him from the lust of blood
That makes a steaming slaughter-house of Rome.

“ Ay, but I meant not thee; I meant not her,
Whom all the pines of Ida shook to see
Slide from that quiet heaven of hers, and tempt
The Trojan, while his neat-herds were abroad;
Nor her that o'er her wounded hunter wept
Her Deity false in human-amorous tears;
Nor whom her beardless apple-arbiter
Decided fairest. Rather, O ye Gods,
Poet-like, as the great Sicilian called
Calliope to grace his golden verse—
Ay, and this Kypria also—did I take
That popular name of thine to shadow forth
The all-generating powers and genial heat
Of Nature, when she strikes thro' the thick blood
Of cattle, and light is large, and lambs are glad
Nosing the mother’s udder, and the bird
Makes his heart voice amid the blaze of flowers:
Which things appear the work of mighty Gods.

“ The Gods! and if I go *my* work is left
Unfinish’d—if I go. The Gods, who haunt
The lucid interspace of world and world,
Where never creeps a cloud, or moves a wind,
Nor ever falls the least white star of snow,
Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans,
Nor sound of human sorrow mounts to mar
Their sacred everlasting calm! and such,
Not all so fine, nor so divine a calm,

Not such, nor all unlike it, man may gain
Letting his own life go. The Gods, the Gods!
If all be atoms, how then should the Gods
Being atomic not be dissoluble,
Not follow the great law? My master held
That Gods there are, for all men so believe.
I prest my footsteps into his, and meant
Surely to lead my Memmius in a train
Of flowery clauses onward to the proof
That Gods there are, and deathless. Meant? I meant?
I have forgotten what I meant: my mind
Stumbles, and all my faculties are lamed.

“ Look where another of our Gods, the Sun,
Apollo, Delius, or of older use
All-seeing Hyperion—what you will—
Has mounted yonder; since he never sware,
Except his wrath were wreak’d on wretched man,
That he would only shine among the dead
Hereafter; tales! for never yet on earth
Could dead flesh creep, or bits of roasting ox
Moan round the spit—nor knows he what he sees
King of the East altho’ he seem, and girt
With song and flame and fragrance, slowly lifts
His golden feet on those empurpled stairs
That climb into the windy halls of heaven:
And here he glances on an eye new-born,
And gets for greeting but a wail of pain;
And here he stays upon a freezing orb
That fain would gaze upon him to the last;
And here upon a yellow eyelid fall’n
And closed by those who mourn a friend in vain,
Not thankful that his troubles are no more.
And me, altho’ his fire is on my face
Blinding, he sees not, nor at all can tell
Whether I mean this day to end myself,
Or lend an ear to Plato where he says,
That men like soldiers may not quit the post
Allotted by the Gods: but he that holds
The Gods are careless, wherefore need he care
Greatly for them, nor rather plunge at once,

Being troubled, wholly out of sight, and sink
 Past earthquake—ay, and gout and stone, that break
 Body toward death, and palsy, death-in-life,
 And wretched age—and worst disease of all,
 These prodigies of myriad nakednesses,
 And twisted shapes of lust, unspeakable,
 Abominable, strangers at my hearth
 Not welcome, harpies miring every dish,
 The phantom husks of something foully done,
 And fleeting thro' the boundless universe,
 And blasting the long quiet of my breast
 With animal heat and dire insanity?

“ How should the mind, except it loved them, clasp
 These idols to herself? or do they fly
 Now thinner, and now thicker, like the flakes
 In a fall of snow, and so press in, perforce
 Of multitude, as crowds that in an hour
 Of civic tumult jam the doors, and bear
 The keepers down, and throng, their rags and they,
 The basest, far into that council-hall
 Where sit the best and stateliest of the land?

“ Can I not fling this horror off me again,
 Seeing with how great ease Nature can smile,
 Balmier and nobler from her bath of storm,
 At random ravage? and how easily
 The mountain there has cast his cloudy slough,
 Now towering o'er him in serenest air,
 A mountain o'er a mountain—ay and within
 All hollow as the hopes and fears of men?

“ But who was he, that in the garden snared
 Picus and Faunus, rustic Gods? a tale
 To laugh at—more to laugh at in myself—
 For look! what is it? there? yon arbutus
 Totters; a noiseless riot underneath
 Strikes through the wood, sets all the tops quivering—
 The mountain quickens into Nymph and Faun;
 And here an Oread—how the sun delights
 To glance and shift about her slippery sides,

And rosy knees and supple roundedness,
And budded bosom-peaks—who this way runs
Before the rest—A satyr, a satyr, see,
Follows; but him I proved impossible;
Twy-natured is no nature: yet he draws
Nearer and nearer, and I scan him now
Beastlier than any phantom of his kind
That ever butted his rough brother-brute
For lust or lusty blood or provender:
I hate, abhor, spit, sicken at him; and she
Loathes him as well; such a precipitate heel,
Fledged as it were with Mercury's ankle-wing,
Whirls her to me: but will she fling herself,
Shameless upon me? Catch her, goatfoot: nay,
Hide, hide them, million-myrtled wilderness,
And cavern-shadowing laurels, hide! do I wish—
What?—that the bush were leafless? or towhelm
All of them in one massacre? O ye Gods,
I know you careless, yet, behold, to you
From childly wont and ancient use I call—
I thought I lived securely as yourselves—
No lewdness, narrowing envy, monkey-spite,
No madness of ambition, avarice, none:
No larger feast than under plane or pine
With neighbours laid along the grass, to take
Only such cups as left us friendly-warm,
Affirming each his own philosophy—
Nothing to mar the sober majesties
Of settled, sweet, Epicurean life.
But now it seems some unseen monster lays
His vast and filthy hands upon my will,
Wrenching it backward into his; and spoils
My bliss in being; and it was not great;
For save when shutting reasons up in rhythm.
Or Heliconian honey in living words,
To make a truth less harsh, I often grew
Tired of so much within our little life,
Or of so little in our little life—
Poor little life that toddles half an hour
Crown'd with a flower or two, and there an end—
And since the nobler pleasure seems to fade,

Why should I, beastlike as I find myself,
Not manlike end myself?—our privilege—
What beast has heart to do it? And what man,
What Roman would be dragg'd in triumph thus?
Not I; not he, who bears one name with her
Whose death-blow struck the dateless doom of kings,
When, brooking not the Tarquin in her veins,
She made her blood in sight of Collatine
And all his peers, flushing the guiltless air,
Spout from the maiden fountain in her heart.
And from it sprang the Commonwealth, which breaks
As I am breaking now!

“ And therefore now

Let her, that is the womb and tomb of all,
Great Nature, take, and forcing far apart
Those blind beginnings that have made me man
Dash them anew together at her will
Through all her cycles—into man once more,
Or beast or bird or fish, or opulent flower:
But till this cosmic order everywhere
Shatter'd into one earthquake in one day
Cracks all to pieces—and that hour perhaps
Is not so far when momentary man
Shall seem no more a something to himself,
But he, his hopes and hates, his homes and fanes,
And even his bones long laid within the grave,
The very sides of the grave itself shall pass,
Vanishing, atom and void, atom and void,
Into the unseen for ever—till that hour,
My golden work in which I told a truth
That stays the rolling Ixonian wheel,
And numbs the Fury's ringlet-snake, and plucks
The mortal soul from out immortal hell,
Shall stand: ay, surely: then it fails at last
And perishes as I must; for O Thou,
Passionless bride, divine Tranquillity,
Yearn'd after by the wisest of the wise,
Who fail to find thee, being as thou art
Without one pleasure and without one pain,
Howbeit I know thou surely must be mine
Or soon or late, yet out of season, thus

I woo thee roughly, for thou carest not
How roughly men may woo thee so they win—
Thus—thus: the soul flies out and dies in the air."

With that he drove the knife into his side:
She heard him raging, heard him fall; ran in,
Beat breast, tore hair, cried out upon herself
As having fail'd in duty to him, shriek'd
That she but meant to win him back, fell on him,
Clasp'd, kiss'd him, wail'd: he answer'd, "Care not thou!
Thy duty? What is duty? Fare thee well!"

ODE AT THE OPENING OF EXHIBITION, 1862

UPLIFT a thousand voices full and sweet,
In this wide hall with Earth's inventions stored,
And praise th' invisible, universal Lord,
Who lets once more in peace the nations meet
Where Science, Art and Labour have outpour'd
Their myriad horns of plenty at our feet.

O silent Father of our Kings to be,
Mourn'd in this golden hour of Jubilce,
For this, for all we weep our thanks to thee!

The world-compelling plan was thine,
And lo! the long laborious miles
Of Palace, lo! the giant Aisles
Rich in model and design,
Harvest-tool and husbandry,
Loom and wheel and Enginery,
Secrets of the sullen mine,
Steel and gold, and corn and wine,
Fabric rough, or fairy-fine,
Sunny tokens of the Line,
Polar marvels, and a feast
Of wonder out of West and East,

And shapes and hues of Art divine!
All of beauty, all of use,
That one fair planet can produce;
Brought from under ev'ry star,
Blown from over ev'ry main,
And mixt, as Life is mixt with pain,
The works of peace with works of war!

And is the Goal so far away?
Far? How far no man can say,
Let us have our dream to-day.

O ye the wise who think, the wise who reign,
From growing Commerce loose her latest chain,
And let the fair white-wing'd peacemaker fly
To happy havens under all the sky,
And mix the seasons and the golden hours,
Till each man find his own in all men's good,
And all men work in noble brotherhood—
Breaking their mailed fleets and armed towers,
And ruling by obeying nature's powers,
And gathering all the fruits of peace, and crown'd with all
her flowers.

APPENDIX

EARLY AND FUGITIVE POEMS WITH SOME ADDED PASSAGES

I

NO MORE

Oh sad No More! Oh sweet No More!

 Oh strange No More!

By a mossed brookbank on a stone

I smelt a wildweed-flower alone;

 There was a ringing in my ears,

 And both my eyes gushed out with tears.

Surely all pleasant things had gone before,

Low-buried fathom-deep beneath with thee, No More!

(*The Gem*, 1831).

II

THE SEA-FAIRIES

Slow sail'd the weary mariners and saw,
Betwixt the green brink and the running foam,
Sweet faces, rounded arms, and bosoms prest
To little harps of gold; and while they mused,
Whispering to each other half in fear,
Shrill music reach'd them on the middle sea.

Whither away, whither away, whither away? fly no more.
Whither away from the high green field, and the happy
 blossoming shore?

Day and night to the billow the fountain calls;
Down shower the gambolling waterfalls
From wandering over the lea:
Out of the live-green heart of the dells
They freshen the silvery-crimson shells,
And thick with white bells the clover-hill swells

High over the full-toned sea:
 O hither, come hither and furl your sails,
 Come hither to me and to me:
 Hither, come hither and frolic and play;
 Here it is only the mew that wails;
 We will sing to you all the day:
 Mariner, mariner, furl your sails,
 For here are the blissful downs and dales,
 And merrily merrily carol the gales,
 And the spangle dances in bight and bay,
 And the rainbow forms and flies on the land
 Over the islands free;
 And the rainbow lives in the curve of the sand;
 Hither, come hither and see;
 And the rainbow hangs on the poisoning wave,
 And sweet is the colour of cove and cave,
 And sweet shall your welcome be:
 O hither, come hither, and be our lords
 For merry brides are we:
 We will kiss sweet kisses, and speak sweet words:
 O listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten
 With pleasure and love and jubilee:
 O listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten
 When the sharp clear twang of the golden chords
 Runs up the ridged sea.
 Who can light on as happy a shore
 All the world o'er, all the world o'er?
 Whither away? listen and stay; mariner, mariner, fly
 no more.

(1853)

III

AS WHEN A MAN

The first four verses of "A Dream of Fair Women." 1833

I

As when a man, that sails in a balloon,
 Downlooking sees the solid shining ground
 Stream from beneath him in the broad blue noon,
 Tilth, hamlet, mead and mound:

2

And takes his flags and waves them to the mob,
That shout below, all faces turned to where
Glows rubylike the far-up crimson globe,
Filled with a finer air:

3

So, lifted high, the Poet at his will
Lets the great world flit from him, seeing all,
Higher thro' secret splendours mounting still,
Self-poised, nor fears to fall.

4

Hearing apart the echoes of his fame.
While I spoke thus, the seedsman, Memory,
Sowed my deep-furrowed thought with many a name,
Whose glory will not die.

IV

TO CHRISTOPHER NORTH

You did late review my lays,
Crusty Christopher;
You did mingle blame and praise,
Rusty Christopher.
When I learnt from whom it came,
I forgave you all the blame,
Musty Christopher;
I could *not* forgive the praise,
Fusty Christopher.

v

THE NEW TIMON AND THE POETS

WE know him, out of Shakespeare's art,
 And those fine curses which he spoke;
 The old Timon, with his noble heart,
 That, strongly loathing, greatly broke.

So died the Old: here comes the New.
 Regard him: a familiar face:
I thought we knew him: What, it's you,
 The padded man—that wears the stays—

Who kill'd the girls and thrill'd the boys,
 With dandy pathos when you wrote,
 A Lion, you, that made a noise,
 And shook a mane en papillotes.

And once you tried the Muses too;
 You fail'd, Sir: therefore now you turn,
 You fall on those who are to you
 As Captain is to Subaltern.

But men of long-enduring hopes,
 And careless what this hour may bring,
 Can pardon little would-be Popes
 And Brummels, when they try to sting.

An artist, Sir, should rest in Art,
 And waive a little of his claim;
 To have the deep Poetic heart
 Is more than all poetic fame.

But you, Sir, you are hard to please;
 You never look but half content:
 Nor like a gentleman at ease,
 With moral breadth of temperament.

And what with spites and what with fears,
 You cannot let a body be:
 It's always ringing in your ears,
 "They call this man as good as *me*."

What profits now to understand
 The merits of a spotless shirt—
 A dapper boot—a little hand—
 If half the little soul is dirt?

You talk of tinsel! Why we see
 The old mark of rouge upon your cheeks.
You prate of Nature! you are he
 That spilt his life about the cliques.

A Timon you! Nay, nay, for shame:
 It looks too arrogant a jest—
 The fierce old man—to take *his* name
 You bandbox. Off, and let him rest.

(*Punch*, February 28, 1846)

VI

BUT SHE TARRIES IN HER PLACE

The last four of sixteen stanzas, the first twelve of which are incorporated in sect. xxvi of "Maud."

BUT she tarries in her place,
 And I paint the beauteous face
 Of the maiden, that I lost,
 In my inner eyes again,
 Lest my heart be overborne
 By the thing I hold in scorn,
 By a dull mechanic ghost
 And a joggle of the brain.

I can shadow forth my bride
 As I knew her fair and kind,
 As I woo'd her for my wife;
 She is lovely by my side
 In the silence of my life—
 'Tis a phantom of the mind.

'Tis a phantom fair and good;
 I can call it to my side,
 So to guard my life from ill,
 Tho' its ghastly sister glide
 And be moved around me still
 With the moving of the blood,
 That is moved not of the will.

Let it pass, the dreary brow,
 Let the dismal face go by.
 Will it lead me to the grave?
 Then I lose it: it will fly:
 Can it overlast the nerves?
 Can it overlive the eye?
 But the other, like a star,
 Thro' the channel windeth far
 Till it fade and fail and die,
 To its Archetype that waits,
 Clad in light by golden gates—
 Clad in light the Spirit waits
 To embrace me in the sky.

(The Tribute, 1837)

VII

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

VERSES FROM THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF 1833, PART IV

A CLOUD-WHITE crown of pearl she dight,
 All raimented in snowy white
 That loosely flew, (her zone in sight,
 Clasped with one blinding diamond bright,)
 Her wide eyes fixed on Camelot,
 Though the squally eastwind keenly
 Blew, with folded arms serenely
 By the water stood the queenly
 Lady of Shalott.

With a steady, stony glance—
 Like some bold seer in a trance.

Beholding all his own mischance,
 Mute, with a glassy countenance—
 She looked down to Camelot.
 It was the closing of the day,
 She loosed the chain, and down she lay,
 The broad stream bore her far away,
 The Lady of Shalott.

As when to sailors while they roam,
 By creeks and outfalls far from home,
 Rising and dropping with the foam,
 From dying swans wild warblings come,
 Blown shoreward; so to Camelot
 Still as the boat-head wound along
 The willowy hills and fields among,
 They heard her chanting her death song,
 The Lady of Shalott.

CONCLUDING STANZA

They crossed themselves, their stars they blest,
 Knight, minstrel, abbot, squire and guest.
 There lay a parchment on her breast,
 That puzzled more than all the rest,
 The well-fed wits at Camelot.
 “*The web was woven curiously,*
The charm is brokenly utterly,
Draw near and fear not—this is I,
 The Lady of Shalott.”

VIII

THE LOTOS-EATERS

CONCLUDING PASSAGE TO THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF 1833

WE have had enough of motion,
 Weariness and wild alarm,
 Tossing on the tossing ocean,
 Where the tuskèd sea-horse walloweth
 In a stripe of grass-green calm,

At noon tide beneath the lee;
And the monstrous narwhale swalloweth
His foam-fountains in the sea.
Long enough the wine-dark wave our weary bark did carry.
This is lovelier and sweeter,
Men of Ithaca, this is meeter,
In the hollow rosy vale to tarry,
Like a dreamy Lotos-eater, a delirious Lotos-eater!
We will eat the Lotos, sweet
As the yellow honeycomb,
In the valley some, and some
On the ancient heights divine;
And no more roam,
On the loud hoar foam,
To the melancholy home
At the limit of the brine,
The little isle of Ithaca, beneath the day's decline.
We'll lift no more the shattered oar,
No more unfurl the straining sail;
With the blissful Lotos-eaters pale
We will abide in the golden vale
Of the Lotos-land till the Lotos fail;
We will not wander more.
Hark! how sweet the horned ewes bleat
On the solitary steeps,
And the merry lizard leaps,
And the foam-white waters pour;
And the dark pine weeps,
And the lithe vine creeps,
And the heavy melon sleeps
On the level of the shore:
Oh! islanders of Ithaca, we will not wander more.
Surely, surely slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labour in the ocean, and rowing with the oar,
Oh! islanders of Ithaca, we will return no more.

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EVERYMAN,
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THEE,
& BE THY GUIDE
IN THY MOST NEED
TO GO BY THY SIDE

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